B. R. MULLIK

LITERARY ESSAYS

Vol. II

CRITICISM

(Third Edition)

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LITERARY ESSAYS

FOR

[M.A. & B. A. Students of English Literature in Indian Universities]

Vol. II

PRINCIPLES OF CRITICISM AND GREAT CRITICS

By

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

Literary Essays is my fifth series—the first four being—*Studies in Poets, Studies in Dramatists, Studies in Novelists* and *Studies in Prose-Writers*. Whereas the first four series cover the papers on Poetry, Drāma, Novel and Prose, the present series—*Literary Essays*—are designed to cover the remaining papers, *viz.*, History of English Literature, Criticism, Essay ; and also help the students in *Viva Voce* test. I hope that this series, like the preceding series, will prove useful to the students of English Literature in Indian Universities.

AGRA ;
January, 1958. B. R. MULLIK

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

In this edition the monograph has been thoroughly revised, and brought up-to-date.

AGRA ;
May, 1963. B. R. MULLIK

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PRINCIPLES OF CRITICISM

1. What is Criticism ?

It is difficult to define the term 'criticism'. Various and contradictory definitions have been given by different critics from antiquity up to the present day, and still the controversy has not been resolved. But in spite of this fact it is but essential that we should have some definition which should strike the mean between the too liberal and too narrow definitions, and which should be serviceable.

Referring to the various definitions of criticism and giving his own definition which is 'Catholic, emotionally neutral, and not contrived with the purpose of recommending a favourite programme, Shumaker has observed in his book, *Elements of Critical Theory* : "The division of opinion runs through dictionaries, encyclopaedias and handbooks. The most authoritative American dictionary, Webster's *New International*, in its second edition defines the relevant sense of criticism as 'the art of judging or evaluation with knowledge and propriety the beauties and faults of works of art or literature'. The monumental *New English Dictionary*, however, asserts that criticism is 'the art of estimating the qualities and character of literary or artistic work ; the function or work of a critic'. In the accompanying quotations Dryden is cited as having written, that by 'criticism, as it was first instituted by Aristotle, was meant a standard of judging well', and Dowden as having declared, 'The effort of criticism in our

time has been...to see things as they are, without partiality, without obtrusion of personal liking or disliking'.

"The difference is paralleled in other reference works, the advantage being evidently on the side of judgment but dissident views now and then asserting themselves. Thrall and Hibbard in a *Handbook to Literature* (1936), describe the critic as 'one who estimates and passes judgment on the value and quality, of the work of others'. Shipley's *Dictionary of World Literature* (1943) points out that the word 'criticism' has been in use only since the seventeenth century, although the judgment it represents is recorded among the Athenians the 5th century B.C. The definition is

> 'The conscious evaluation or appreciation of a work of art, either according to the critic's personal taste or according to some accepted aesthetic ideas......Increasingly it is stated (T.S. Eliot) as it was almost always (save among the Romantics) implied, that (I.A. Richards) : to set up as a critic is to set up as a judge of values.'

"The 1946 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Americana* is in essential agreement : 'In its narrow sense, the art of criticism is confined to the study of the beauties or defects of some particular work.' Yet there is a broader sense, too, in which the term 'includes the establishment as well as the application of principles'—a task in which 'it must be largely indebted to philosophy'. The eleventh edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* at first also defers to the opinion that criticism is 'the art of judging the qualities and values of an aesthetic object, whether in literature or the fine arts'. No sooner, however, has Edmund Gosse, the author of the article, made a respectful genuflection to appraisal than he expressed another view, which he

apparently prefers. The term 'has come...to possess a secondary and specialized meaning as a published analysis of the qualities and characteristics of a work in literature, or fine art'. On the other side, again, Ferdinand Brunetiere, in *La Grande Encyclopedie* (the French equivalent of the Britannica) argues strongly for the duty of judgment, although he admits the increasing importance of explication, 'which may at times seem to have become in our century the whole of criticism'. The fifteenth edition of *Der Grosse Brockhaus* repeats the emphasis on judgment but urges relativistic standards. 'Literary-aesthetic (criticism) concerns itself preferably with examination of whether a writing conforms to the material and formal laws of beauty accepted at the time it was composed. 'The *Encyclopaedia Italiana* subsumes *critica letteraria* under *critica* in the general sense and defines the latter as 'any activity or working of the human mind which attempts to distinguish those qualities of a given object which have value from those which do not'. 'Finally, the American *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology* which has a special interest because it draws up in the disciplined thought of philosophical aesthetics (not necessarily a kind of thinking which coincides exactly with that of literary criticism), pronounces criticism to be 'the appreciation or estimation of works of art, an activity that would seem to include the exercise of taste and hence an avowal of preferences'.

"It is evident that the 'authorities' who can most confidently be expected to show impartiality are not in complete agreement. The widespread practice of critical evaluation is admitted, but there is dessension about whether the practice is compulsive. The reason, I think,

is fairly clear ; a traditional view has lately begun to encounter strong opposition. The opposition is implied in the argumentative tone of some of the definitions and explicitly mentioned in others. The prestige of the tradition is especially apparent in Gosse's willingness to defer to it before remarking on the emergence of a new emphasis, and the treat of the new emphasis ; in Brunetiere's insistence that it is improper.

"Some respectable support has already been presented for the view that the critic may analyse without appraising. Much more is available. First of all there are ambiguous statements which may be interpreted either as supporting or as denying the necessity of appraising. Thus A. Ricardou asserts that 'literary criticism consists in analysing a writer's work explaining it by its causes, judging its aesthetic value'. Are the three aims concurrent or separable ? W. C. Brownell on a single page if not quite in a single sentence throws his reader into a similar perplexity. Criticism is the 'statement of the concrete in tetms of the abstract' its function being 'to discern and characterize the abstract qualities informing the concrete expression of the artist'. Its 'concern', however, is 'to measure (the author's) success by the correspondence of his expression to the idea it suggests and by the value of the idea itself.' Why need the critic be concerned about doing something which is no part of his function ? Remarks like these can be cited either to support or to attack a belief that judging is an unconditional obligation.

"Much more persuasive because less quibbling is evidence drawn from outright self-contradictions in the writings of persons who have insisted on evaluation- J. M.

Murry declared unequivocally for the traditional view in one essay, only to show an inconsistent liberality in another printed in the same volume. In the '*Function of Criticism*' he says,

> 'The critic has not merely the right, but the duty, to judge between Homer and Shakespeare, between Dante and Milton, between Cezanne and Michelangelo, Beethoven and Mozart......The function of true criticism is to establish a definite hierarchy among the great artists of the past, as well as to test the production of the present.'

"This on page 14. Yet on page 180 he admits the existence of another important type of criticism, which is analysis of poetic method, an investigation and appreciation of the means by which the poet communicates his intuitive comprehension to an audience. An 'important' type of criticism even if not 'true', can hardly be ruled non-existent ; and acknowledgement of its actuality by a man admittedly unfriendly to it carries special conviction. T. S. Eliot, who was cited in Shipley as an exponent of the 'duty of judging', can also be quoted in support of the contrary view. In *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* he said,

> I assume that criticism is that department of thought which either seeks to find out what poetry is, what its use is, what desires it satisfies, why it is written and why read or recited ; or which......assesses actual poetry...... (There are) these two theoretical limits of criticism ; at once of which we attempt to answer the question 'what is poetry ?' and at the other 'is this a good poem ?'

Appraisals, then, are offered by some critics but not by all ; and Eliot himself sometimes analyzes without evaluating.

"The contradictions are easier to explain than the

ambiguities. The writer is thrown off balance by the disparity between what he sees and what he would like to see. He offers an ideal definition which he later confesses, either explicitly or by indirection, not to have been empirical. But the ambiguities also, whether contrived to hide issues or the result of a failure to perceive them, assist one's recognition that the requirement of judgment is not agreed to be absolute.

"If this were not enough, some definitions either ignore or repudiate the necessity of evaluating. For J. M. Robertson, writing in 1889 (I begin here to note dates in order to avoid giving the impression that a minority opinion is just now emerging) ; criticism was 'only a department of inquiry entered upon from the same kind of motives as lead men to scientific research commonly so-called. These may be summed up as the impulses of curiosity and self-expression—the desire to know, and the need to express notions.' The French critic Scherer had made an even sharper disavowal as early as 1861 :

> 'Our aesthetic prefers contemplating to judging, studying to appreciating ; or, if it appreciates, it does so by letting the inmost sense of a work speak and reveal itself by degrees. It puts everything in its place, finds a place for everything. It has renounced the sterile procedure which consists in opposing one form of the beautiful to another, in preferring, in excluding. It has no prejudice, does, not make up its mind in advance. It believes everything, likes everything, endures everything......It is vast as the world, as tolerant as nature.'

"The most elaborate case against judgment seems to have been made out, however, by Richard Moulton in the 1880's. It deserves to be looked at in some detail.

"The argument appears in the long introduction to

Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist, a book significantly subtitled *A Popular Illustration of the Principles of Scientific Criticism*. At the moment, said Moulton, criticism only rarely aspired to scientific objectivity. 'The prevailing notions of criticism are dominated by the idea of *assaying*, as if its function were to test the soundness and estimate the comparative value of literary work. Yet there are in fact 'two different kinds of literary criticism, as distinct as any two things that can be called by the same name. The difference between the two may be summed up as the difference between the work of a *judge* and of an *investigator*. The one is the enquiry into what ought to be, the other the enquiry into what is.' The literary judge uses evaluative terms freely and by preference; he will not hesitate, for instance, to speak of the 'decay' of the later Jacobean drama will be based on the perception that it is a new species, qualitatively different from the drama which immediately preceded it. 'If the new species be an easier form of art it does not on that account lose its claim to be analysed.' The scientific critic, like the physicist or sociologist does not commit himself to assertions of goodness or badness. He accepts his *donnee* as what it is and tries to comprehend it by analysis.

"Moulton guards himself carefully against narrowness. He acknowledges that judicial criticism 'has long been established as a favourite pursuit of highly cultivated minds' and has justified its existence (though, he is later at pains to show how frequently evaluative judgments have been reversed). Nevertheless, it enjoys an illegitimate supremacy. 'The word criticism itself has suffered, and the methodical treatment of literature has by tacit assumption become limited in idea to the judicial method.' The

explanation is that 'modern criticism took its rise before the importance of induction was recognised; it lags behind other branches of thought in adapting itself to inductive treatment.' For a long time, however, the emphasis has been shifting.

> 'In the conflict between judicial criticism and science the most important point is to note how the critics' own ideas of criticism are found to be gradually slipping away from them. Between the Renaissance and the present-day criticism, as judged by the methods actually followed by critics, has slowly changed from the form of laying down laws to authors into the form of receiving laws from authors.'

"Moulton's desire at once to herald the triumph of the investigators and lament the ascendancy of the judges is no doubt inconsistent. Nevertheless, his central argument is, I think, incontestable. In the classical period (except by Aristotle, who although interpreted as a law-giver worked mainly by induction) and again after the renewal of critical inquiry at the Renaissance, it was regularly assumed that the critics' function was to measure literary works against accepted canons of aesthetic, rhetorical, and moral propriety. Even after the success of inductive methods in the physical sciences had inspired the use of analogous methods in the humanities, there continued, as the result of simple inertia, to be an insistence on the compulsion to appraise. But in the meantime the older agreement on canons had disappeared, with the result that some critics continued to apply the discredited standards; others used standards which admitted to be personal; a few like Brunetiere who studies the laws of genres, professed to have established new standards by induction; and still others refused to appraise

at all. I believe I am not mistaken when I say that the last group has become proportionately very large and now includes many highly esteemed critics, both academic and non-academic.

"The narrow meaning of criticism has been repudiated again since Moulton's book was published. Spingarn repudiated it in 1910 in his lecture, 'The New Criticism.' Cazamian repudiated it in 1929 when he wrote, 'All sincere reflection upon a text is criticism of a sort ; and the best criticism is just that reflection carried as far as it can go.' R. P. Blackmur repudiated it in 1935 by saying that he understood criticism to be simply the 'formal discourse of an amateur.' He added in the same essay, 'Any rational approach is valid to literature and may be properly called critical which fastens at any point upon the work itself.' Stanley Edgar Hyman recently noted the vogue of the repudiation in the introductory chapter of his study of modern critical methods : evaluation 'has largely atrophied in the serious criticism of our time,' even Richards has recanted the opinion quoted by the editors of Shipley's *Dictionary* that to 'set up as a critic is to set up as a judge of values.' This sentence occurs in *The Principles of Literary Criticism* but in *Coleridge* on the *Imagination* which appeared early enough to have been accessible to the editors of the *Dictionary*, Richards had already expressed his maturer view that evaluation was 'suasion' or a ritual of 'communion' and no essential part of the critical process. His own method had become that of experiment and analysis.

"It is evident, then, that a general definition of criticism must be catholic, emotionally neutral and not contrived with the purpose of recommending a favourite pro-

gramme. Unfortunately, neither of the only two quoted definitions which fit these conditions is precise enough to be serviceable. Blackmur's phrase 'the formal discourse of an amateur', is at once too loose and too restrictive. (Why an amateur ?) Cazamian's demand for sincerity brings the critic's motives unnecessarily into question. We must be content to say that *criticism is any intelligent discussion of literature*, taking care to enjoin that 'intelligent' be interpreted liberally and that literature be the focus and not merely the vehicle of the critic's interest.

"This phrasing is sufficiently broad to admit both evaluative judgment and analysis in any of its myriad forms. If it irritates some readers by opening up horizons behind which they had felt cozily secure, it will avoid frustrating others by excluding from discussion processes in which they take an especially lively interest. Moreover, as we continue to reflect about the dispute, does it not suddenly become plain that the issue can be compromised ? Judgment is indeed essential to criticism—but only because intelligent analysis, like intelligent evaluation, depends heavily on the exercise of judgment. We ought to have recognised from the beginning that the handling of analytical data is no less discriminatory than choices among evaluative verdicts.

"Finally, since the aim of analysis is apprehension and that of evaluation is an accurate sense of value, we may add that the ultimate critical goal, whether attainable or not, *is the full evaluated apprehension of the critical subject matter*."

2. The Functions of Criticism.

There has been a lot of controversy about the functions

of criticism, and the role that a critic is called upon to play. According to the formal and classical view, the critic is considered to be the law-giver, whose business it is to instruct the writers, and lay down certain rules which they must follow. The opposite view is that the function of criticism is to interpret and analyse, the works of art and compare them with others. Instead of being law-giver, wielding the rod of authority, the critic's business is to follow the artist, and see the work of art as in itself it really is.

Discussing the futility and danger of formal criticism, Prof. Ifor Evans has observed in his essay, *The Limits of Literary Criticism* : "Modern criticism began with two unrelated causes which happened to synchronize in time ; one was the printing press and the other was the interest in classical literature which was part of the Renaissance. In the Middle Ages very little critical work was produced either by creative writers themselves or by those in contact with them. The only exception in Western Europe from late Roman times to the sixteenth century apart from such a work as Bede's prosodic text book *De Arte Metrica* and what may lie in the lost literature of the medieval period, is Dante's Latin pamphlet *De Vulagari Eloquentia*. The poets introduced critical commentary into their poems, but this was of an incidental character. But in Italy from the early decades of the sixteenth century onwards, the critical work of Aristotle, and of Horace particularly, is re-discovered. This renaissance critics have no uncertainty about the business of criticism ; for them the critic's function is to teach the writer how to write, and the generalizations of Aristotle and Horace are constructed into dogmatic principles for this purpose.

The reflection of their work can be seen in *Sidney's Apologie for Poetrie*, and in similar work in sixteenth century England. Whatever is true of literary criticism, one thing is certainly fallacious and that is this contention, implied by so much renaissance criticism that the critic can teach the writer how he ought to write. Formal criticism can, on the contrary, be positive danger to the creative writer, as can be seen in the comparison of poems such as *Troilus and Criseyde* and the *Faerie Queene*. Both poets are interested in form but in different way. Chaucer has before him an elaborate narrative poem, the *Filostrato* of Boccaccio. He wishes to use that as a basis for a poem in English. He has no preconception of what form his poem should be in : he has fortunately no critical dogmatist at hand to whom to turn for instruction. He absorbs as much of the design of the *Filostrato* as is useful to his purpose and then he allows his mind to work on the material. He creates form by the necessity of his poetical purpose, and so invents a new method in story telling with such admirable welding of character and incident that nothing in narrative in England can be compared with his *Troilus and Criseyde* until we come to Fielding's prose novels in the eighteenth century, and Fielding with all his skill has, by some been considered clumsy in comparison with Chaucer. Spenser also, in *The Faerie Queene*, thinks about form but he believes that literary criticism and a preconceived notion of the pattern of the ancient epic can help him. He is led not to a clarification of his purpose as a creative artist but to confusion. In imitation of the epic he begins his poem in the middle, without explanations, and leaves the work of elucidation to a prose preface. Again, in imitation of the epic, he develops

intricate complications in the narration. Finally, in misconception of the intention of the epic, he adds a moral allegory that entangles any reader who pays much attention to it. I am far from attempting to deny the greatness of *The Faerie Queene* ; the beauty of its stanza, its diction, its world of 'mental space' ; its dream pictures, have attracted most great English poets since Spenser's time, but all that is confused within the poem arises from the renaissance belief that criticism has some formula that can teach one how to write or even how to construct.

"One must admit that study and even imitation may help a writer, but such study must be personal and it need not be guided by formal critical knowledge. Chaucer shows frequently in *Troilus and Criseyde* that he is thinking how best he can shape his poem. For instance, he realizes that the wars of the Greeks and the Trojans are not essential to his story of the love of Troilus and Criseyde, and when he finds himself in danger of being drawn away to discuss them, he pulls himself up and writes :

> 'But how this toun com to destruccioun
> Ne falleth nought to purpos me to telle ;
> For it were here a long digressioun
> Fro my matere, and you to longe dwelle.'

Had Chaucer the formal critical knowledge available in Spenser time, his poem might have been a pedantic confusion instead of a cunning, independently wrought piece of clear narrative.

"I sometimes wonder what the history of English poetry, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, would have been had it never been perplexed with this belief that the critic can instruct the creative writer, and

the pedant point the way to Parnassus. It must be admitted that this formal criticism set the poets at work in an ambitious way ; the motive of fame which Milton admits as part of the writer's urge comes in as an incentive from this source. We are too apt, with our easy application of evolutionary principles to literary history, to believe that the way things happened was the inevitable and best way. Far from all that formal discussion, what emerges but a mass of warped creative writing in epic and tragedy, with the mind of Milton alone triumphing in a combination of critical precept and creative purpose in *Paradise Lost ?*

"Even the sense of ambition which this formal criticism gave to creative writers is not without its penalty, as can be seen in the history of the long poem in English. Most poets since the Renaissance have been persecuted by the Aristotlean precept that the long poem has some virtue in its very length ; Drayton, a natural lyrical poet, is driven to the ponderous *Polyolbion* ; Tennyson is waylaid from the short pieces which he manages so admirably in the 1842 volume into treacherous Arthurian material ; Browning attempts it in *The Ring and the Book*, and Swinburne in *Tristram of Lyonesse.* The critic was the will o' the wisp leading them from their poetic purpose into pursuit of that phantom epic. No one, until Edgar Allan Poe, had the courage to suggest that the short poem might have virtues of considerable importance. Poe even suggested that a long poem was a series of poetic moments with flat intervening passages. One must view his dictum in the light of literary history to see how independent and courageous it was. 'I hold that a long poem does not exist, I maintain that the phrase "a

long poem" is simply a flat contradiction in terms'. To Poe even *Paradise Lost* is successful only as a series of minor poems with material that keeps them together. I am not prepared to defend Poe, but his attack upon the superior position occupied by mere length and size in poetical composition was timely.

"The danger of criticism for the creative writer can be seen clearly in the development of the modern novel from the work of Fielding and Richardson to the adventurous practitioners of today. The modern novel had the good fortune to be without a classical pedigree ; Aristotle had not spoken on the novel for there was no novel to speak of. Renaissance critics had constructed no dogmatic principles on the essentials of the novel form for they were unaware of the wide ranging possibilities of prose narrative fiction. The result has been that, within the novel, the creative writer has experimented more with form in a short time than in any other branch of literature. There has been very little writing about the novel, less in England than in France and Germany ; writers have written novels instead, and when we think of England alone, what variety of form and effect is called up by such names as *Robinson Crusoe*, *Clarissa Harlowe*, *Tom Jones*, *Tristram Shandy*, *Waverley*, *Emma*, *Pickwick Papers*, *Wuthering Heights*, *The Warden*, *The Egoist*, *The Woodlanders*, *The Wings of the Dove*, *Tono Bungay*, *The Old Wives Tale*, *Sons and Lovers*, *Antic Hay*, *Ulysses*, and *Mrs. Dalloway*. Would such freedom in prose narrative have been possible had the critics come in first and set up their prescriptions for the novel as the poets had prescriptions for epic and tragedy ? It very nearly happened. Fielding, as all the text books indicate, was toying playfully with the epic

form in his plan of *Tom Jones*. One trick of his game was to put separate short stories into his novel to take the place of episodes in the epic. That piece of formalism clung to the novel long after its original purpose was forgotten. It entered even into *Pickwick*, and in *The Stroller's Tale* we find one of the strangest tributes to the pedantic renaissance traditions of formal criticism that exists in English literature."

Referring to the danger of formal criticism, and giving his views about the proper functions of criticism, Prof. Grierson has observed in his essay, *Criticism and Creation*: "What is the relation of the critic to the work of the creative artist ? What is he trying to do when the comments on a play by Shakespeare or a poem by Wordsworth ? The general answer to-day would be that he is the interpreter to less appreciative readers, a valuator indicating what the poet has set himself to do ; how far he has succeeded or fallen short, and what is the final worth of the work, if the author has succeeded in his aim or, it may be, achieved something else by the way. 'It is a very good office,' says by Hazlitt, 'one man does another when he tells him the manner of his being pleased.' But the critic has not always been content with such a limited view of his function. He has often, very definitely at certain periods, and still at times, been tempted to think that he may be an instructor not only to other readers but to the poet, that his judgments are based on principles, irrefragable principles, the neglect of which it is his duty to point out, judged by which principles it became a duty to condemn, for example, the *Cid* of Corneille notwithstanding the approval which it had gained from the distinguished audiences that crowded Mondory's theatre. Such a con-

demnation might, of course, represent the reaction of a more understanding and cultivated taste correcting the too facile response of a mixed audience to a somewhat cheap appeal. But that was not the claim made by the Academy when it acted at the instance of Richelieu. It was that they were the defenders of certain laws which Corneille had violated, laws of the drama as definite and authoritative in their sphere as the laws which govern our conduct or the, perhaps still more rigid, laws of social etiquette. And this was the claim of Renaissance criticism as it took its rise in Italy and pervaded the critical writings of Western Europe. It spoke as a law-giver, though it is worth noting at the outset of what I have to discuss that in just those countries where the creative spirit was strongest, notable in the drama in Spain and England, this authoritative criticism had least practical effect, even when it received a polite acquiescence in any critical discussion.

"What is the function if he can no longer presume to instruct, to arraign the breaker of rules fixed by Aristotle and the Ancients? If the golden rule for poet and critic is that there is no rule? Even the simplest rules, Purity, Propriety, Correctness, are all relative, subordinate to the broader rule laid down by Aristotle in the *Rhetoric* that a speech or any other composition is the product of three factors, the speaker, the subject, and the audience. His function is to interpret the wayward work of genius, for human nature and life are too complex for anyone to foretell in what way a genius may or may not succeed in achieving and communicating a new and complex harmony. It is his function, if he can achieve it, to show that a harmony has been achieved, or has not, that all the beauty of the *Idylls of the King* may yet leave one with

an uneasy feeling that this is not the way in which these particular stories cried out to be told. And if a harmony has been achieved it remains for him to reveal the complexity and the value of the elements of which it is composed. The perfection of the poem is in its harmony, the unity of effect ; its greatness in the number and value of the elements thus harmonized. The *Ancient Mariner* seems to me a quite perfect poem, as Lamb at once perceived when Southey could see nothing in it but a Dutch attempt at sublimity, and even Wordsworth was doubtful. But the *Divine Comedy* is a greater poem because it has harmonized so much more in its picture of despair in Hell of evergrowing hope in the Purgatory, of all the radiance of love and joy in the Paradise. It is a difficult task, the critic's, and the history of criticism is strewn with mistaken judgment ; difficult whether he has to try to form a just estimate of the past, to tell why such and such a poet has been over or under-estimated in his day, or, on the other hand, is brought face to face with something new, a Wordsworth, a Keats, a Tennyson, Lamb laid his finger at once on what was best in the *Lyrical Ballads*, the *Ancient Mariner* and the *Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey*. Lockhart was in the observatory when two stars of the first magnitude arose in the sky and he missed them both—Keats and Tennyson. To Crabbe the *Ancient Mariner* (which he attributed to Lamb) seemed an interesting attempt to portray madness not by its effects but by an imitation, 'as if a painter to give a picture of lunacy should make his canvas crazy and fill it with wild unconnected limbs and distortion of features yet one or two of the limbs are pretty'. It was not quite otherwise that a poem such as *The Waste*

Land appeared to some of us older people.

"Two tendencies the critic should fight against, though they are invincible, prejudice and dogmatism, the wish to pontificate. The first is that to which we older readers are disposed; our taste is formed and a new phenomenon makes us not only uncomfortable but too often angry. The latter is that to which the young lean, as when Mr. Eliot and Mr. Leavis and Mr. Herbert Read undertake the revaluation for their dogmatic findings. If a poet has appealed in the past to judges whose worth is not to be set aside it may be less useful to tell us that you personally do not like the poet than to discover what it was that made such appeal and why his work has lost interest, for doing so one may recover a juster appreciation of some temporarily neglected poet, a Donne or a Crabbe. Mr. T. C. Eliot tells us that none can appreciate Shelley who has outgrown adolescence, that he turns to Shelley now only to check a reference. The late Professor Saintsbury was not a young man when he died. He was, like Mr. Eliot, an ardent Christian and Anglican. He hated all Shelley's political and religious sentiments, yet he pronounced Shelley the quintessential poet. How is one to explain such a divergence? The immediate inference would seem to be that Saintsbury was still young when over seventy: Mr. Eliot already old before fully seventeen, which would probably not be quite a fair inference. On the other hand youth has claims to respect. I always declined to speak *ex cathedra* on quite modern poets though willing to talk about them in Societies where student and professor could meet on equal terms, for the young know best what appeals to them. Our tastes are to some extent formed. If a poem makes immediate and strong appeal

to a large number of young and able readers, as did *The Waste Land*, it behaves an older critic to give it careful thought. He may find in the end what it is that has attracted, if to him it still appears a highly sophisticated work of the imagination reacting to many influences. Mr. Richards indeed seems to hope that criticism will in the end, by the aid of psychology, become scientific, that we shall discover something corresponding to a piece of litmus paper which, applied to a poem, will reveal by a change of colour whether it is a product of Fancy or Imagination. I doubt it. Criticism will always represent the reaction of this or that individual mind or the mind of a period, Jacobean, Victorian, to a work of the imagination, and it will be, as with the mean in the sphere of morals, as the wise man would pronounce'. From that circle it is impossible to escape. The wise man defines the mean. The man who correctly defines the mean is wise. Good wine is what the man with a good palate prefers. The good palate is that which recognizes good wine. So with the critics. They are the satellites which move around the poet, illuminating, transfiguring; distorting. But both poet and critic draw their light from the sun of beauty and truth, and we may be glad of both. Personally I do not share the objection often expressed just now to the critic who is in a part poet himself and describes poetically his reactions to a poem. Indeed I prefer it to much that affects to be scientific, dry, and magisterial. Why object to having two good things—*Hamlet* and Goethe or Coleridge on *Hamlet*, Johnson on Dryden and Pope and Gray, Dryden on Chaucer, Lamb on Milton, Arnold on Wordsworth and Byron, Swinburne on Coleridge and Shelley ? One cannot have too much of

what is good."

3. Qualities of a Good Critic.

After considering the proper definition of criticism, and the proper functions of criticism, let us examine the qualities of a good critic. Discussing these qualities, Kellett has observed in his book, *Fashion in Literature* : "The critic must be a man of wide and very varied experience in reading almost, if not quite, as wide as that of Jonson in eating. Otherwise he will not have sufficient materials on which to base a judgment. He must be thoroughly acquainted with the great authors in several languages, or he will have no standard at all. But he must also have read many inferior authors, or he will put his candidate too low. As an examiner must know the whole range of his subject, or he cannot examine, but must also know the average abilities of men of twenty-two, or his standard will be absurdly high ; so with the examiner of a book.

"Next, he must not only have read, but must have reflected on his reading and accustomed himself to analyse the impressions the reading has made on his own mind. In fact, he must be a self-critic, as well as a critic of books, he must be more severe with them. When he finds himself liking or disliking a book, he must consider whether this or that feeling may not be due to certain features of his own character, and whether these features are accidental or general. Like an astronomer, he will try to correct his personal equation, and detach his own preferences as far as possible from his judgments. It should be his aim to give a fair criticism of something that he may personally dislike. This implies *sympathy*.

"Allied with this is a capacity which, of late years has been more visible, and more strongly insisted on, than before a psychological gift, both natural and trained; a power to discover, to some extent, the mind of the author behind the book. For the critic realises that the book is part of the man who wrote it, and that as it throws light on the man, so, when you attain some idea of the man, you understand the book better. This is the secret of the attempts that have so often been made to discover the *real* Shakespeare, the *real* Shelley, the *real* Byron. As an illustration, I need do not more than refer to certain recent works on Milton's work both French and English. The writers of these books by a close chronological study of Milton's works, prose, poetry, Latin, Italian, English, endeavour to reach an idea of the character of the man, and the changes that it underwent as years and circumstances set their mark on it. Thus equipped they have come back to the poems, and have not only understood them better themselves, but have made *us* understand them better. They are aided, of course, by the fact that we know a good deal, apart from the poems, about Milton. But those who have read Andrew Bradley's essay on 'Shakespeare the Man' will see that even in the case of the poet who does not 'abide our question,' much may be learned; and I am convinced that the merits of Bradley's criticism of *Lear* and *Macbeth* are largely due to this attempt, incompletely successful as it necessarily was, to get at the mind of their author.

"And the complete critic must also have the teaching power. He must not only have the trained taste, and the psychological gift, but he must have the communi-

cating capacity as well. We do not call a man a critic who can merely criticise in silence; he must be able to give words to his ideas. (It may be true I will consider this in a moment—that critics are men who have failed as writers; but at any rate they must know how to write.) In this respect literary criticism differs from criticism in all other arts; it is a branch, often a humble branch, of the art it criticises; and sometimes, as in the case of Taine, Sainte Beuve, De Quincey or Hazlitt, it is not humble, but very lofty. Pope said of the critic Longinus that he was himself the great sublime he drew. We cannot expect all critics to win such praise; but if who drives fat oxen should himself be fat, who criticises authors must be something of an author himself. In striving to guide our taste, he must not provide a horrid example of tastelessness.

"Another very desirable gift of the critic—though some good critics manage to be without it is the philosophical mind—the mind, to put it crudely and briefly which is accustomed to distinguish between appearance and reality, and knows from experience how terribly difficult the task of drawing that distinction is. It is largely this which makes Andrew Bradley such a good critic; and is this which makes De Quincey, in my opinion, as great a critic—when he turns his attention that way—as any in our language. We notice, as we read him, the constant 'Distinguo' of which I spoke just now; he is never content to assume that things which seem the same are anything but similar. As he has also an unsurpassed command of language to mark these distinctions, he is scarecely to be left out of any list of great critics. Something of the same training is to be seen in Lessing, perfectly simple

as is the language he chooses to express his thoughts. And it is the absence of this gift which explains Macaulay's weakness on this side of his comprehensive mind—a weakness which, with his usual modesty and self-knowledge, he confessed without reserve. He had taste, but not the critical power. He writes to Napier—'Hazlitt used to say himself, 'I am nothing if not critical'. The case with me is directly the reverse. I have a strong and acute enjoyment of works of the imagination; but I have never habituated myself to dissect them. Perhaps I enjoy them the more keenly for that very reason. Such books as Lessing's *Laocoon*, such passages as the criticism on Hamlet in *Wilhelm Meister*, fill me with wonder and despair. I have never written a page of criticism on poetry, or the fine arts, which I would not burn if I had the power.'

"This is true; and it is allied with the fact that Macaulay could not read Kant, and read Plato not for his philosophy but for the style and setting of his dialogues. Consider his treatment of Robert Montgomery. Macaulay *felt the Omnipresence of the Deity* to be bad; but he could prove it only by pointing out little slips of grammar and unimportant plagiarisms from better poets. There would have been something very different if De Quincey had handled the poem.

"If the saying that a critic is a man who has failed in original work was in the first instance uttered in scorn, it may, I think be taken quite seriously. No one can criticise fairly who does not know the difficulties of the art; and he cannot really know them unless he has himself made the attempt. The man who did not know whether he could play the violin or not, because he had

never tried, would be a very bad critic of Kreisler or Elman. I have often watched the watchers at a billiard-match, when the hundreds are reeled off so easily that the ignorant do not cheer. It looks so simple that the ordinary man thinks he could do it himself. But the man who can make fifty—*he* praises and praises unstintedly. It is the same with literature, especially with poetry. I would have every critic of poetry a man who has failed as a poet, and knows he has failed. Let me give an instance from my own experience. I have written one or two novels. They have never been published—I never even sent them up to a publisher. But I learnt much from them as to the difficulties of a novelist's art—difficulties often so triumphantly surmounted. Particularly have I noticed the difficulty of the padding—that part of the novel which at first sight seems superfluous, but which is really so necessary for giving the book due balance and proportion. I found this terribly hard to do. And ever since then I have been far more merciful even to some of the worst novelists I know, who have yet contrived with apparent ease to pad out their plots neatly and harmoniously. I would then have as critics of novels those who have themselves failed as novelists. But they must also be aware of their failure ; and this is why good novel-critics are so few.

"But a critic must not have failed too completely ; he must not be a total incompetent. And this brings me to the one indispensable qualification of the true critic, which I have left to the last because it includes all the rest. Though he may be a poor executant, though he may be incapable of giving due expression to the thoughts which burn within him, he must have a share, and a large share,

of the creative imagination which is the mark of the writer whom he undertakes to criticise. He must, in no inconsiderable measure, see what the poet sees and hear what he hears. If, through a defect in his vision or audition, he cannot enter into his author's world has presented it. It is true that the author's own intensity of feeling may render *him* a bad judge *because* of its very intensity. He may be like a good mathematician, who leaps intuitively to conclusions, and is unable to see that his explanations are obscure to the duller perceptions of his hearers. Thus the comparative dullness of the critic's senses may actually help him more calmly to judge the work—it leaves more of his mind at leisure for the exercise of judgment—but unless he has *some* imagination, some spark of the Promethean fire, he will fail utterly. This is why Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt, and De Quincey are such good critics : they are all imaginative writers. And this is why Shelley, Arnorld, and Coleridge, in their tranquil moments of recollection when their highest powers are in abeyance but yet alive, are such good critics also.

"The perfect critic, then, was never, born and never will be born. 'Enough', said Rasselas to Imlac, 'you have convinced me that no man will ever be a poet.' 'Enough' reader will say ; 'you have convinced us that it is as difficult to judge a book as to make one and more especially so as one has to make one book while judging another'. The poet soars to heaven ; the critic only climbs a short pole ; but the pole is well greased. Nevertheless the critic, even the imperfect one, has his utility ; and all those who have benefited by criticism will admit it. He corrects our tastes, he justifies them, he even in some cases gives birth to them where, in the strict sense,

they have hardly existed before."

The qualities of a good critic have been beautifully summed up by Scott James in his inimitable book, *The Making of Literature* : "Since the best critic of engineering is an engineer, and the best critic of gardening is a gardener, we have asked whether the best critic of poetry is also a poet. The answer, in part, is given by the many great poets who have been critics. Some, like Dryden, Goethe and Arnold, have opened their minds to all literature with Catholic understanding. Others with more restricted tastes—Swinburne, for example, or Francis Thompson—have written eloquently of just those poets who were peculiarly congenial to them. But in the main the greater poet critics have proved pre-eminent just where we should expect them to be—in declaring how a work of art is made, and what it aims at doing. They have been able to tell us how the job begins, what is its technique, and what is its end. Whenever they have added to the power of creation the gift of self-analysis, their verdict upon the inner laws of poetry has the weight not of sound judgment alone, but also of evidence.

"But though it is an engineer who speaks with highest authority on the methods of engineering, not every member of the profession is an expert in all branches of it ; and there are more varieties within the art of letters than there are in engineering. Indeed, the diversity in the work of men of letters is almost as wide as that which appears in the whole of human nature, for they differ from the rest of humanity not in the character of their perception, but in the abundance or the intensity of them. What all poetry possesses in common, every reflective poet is qualified to understand. But one poet is not

necessarily an expert in regard to much that may be essential in another; the first may be unfamiliar with or indifferent to the matter which attracts the second; and it may even be that the intensity of his gaze in one direction may distract him from alertness in another. It is only insofar as certain common principles enter into all literary art, arising from its nature, that all the creative artists stand on common ground. But there they speak each for all, and all for each, with the authority of men who have the 'evidence of all rules' within them. The subject on which they then speak is one with which every critic is concerned. Their expertness must also be his.

"But a piece of literature implies not only a writer, but also reader. There is a voice at one end, a listener at the other. The critic is the listener who understands what is said to him, missing nothing, from the deeper weight of the meaning to the subtlest indications of a tone of voice. He may like or not like the voice. What it says may be true or untrue, sweet or harsh. But so far as the degree of clearness in expression permits, he must understand; and to do so he must be able to reconstruct what it is that the speaker has seen, judged worthwhile, said, and attempted to say.

"The reader, the appreciator the appraiser, the judge, the censor—what shall we call him?—for the critic is all of these things (but a censor, I presume, only in the very last resort)—the critical reader has to put himself as nearly as possible where the writer stands. It is the latter who has done the pioneer work. He has constructed the piece. Though the appreciative reader must be able to reconstruct it for himself, he has been shown the way. The artist may be compared to a pioneer who has surveyed

the jungle, cut a way through it and laid down a track. The critic is like the first inspector who goes over that finished track to test it. He sees the wildness of the jungle through which the way was driven ; he judges how soundly the road material is laid, and how much toil it took to lay it. He, perhaps, would have preferred that some other direction here and there should have been taken, to avoid that arduous incline, that abrupt turn, that unnecessary and rather crazy bridge. But no matter, this is the route chosen, and he must follow it ; and he will estimate it before the road is thick with traffic and its appearance changed by clearances in the surrounding jungle, before it has become civilized, familiar, commonplace, conventional. But if it happens that he comes late, when the road has already been transformed by incessant use, and he would judge the work as it was first done, he must think away all the later things that have been added, and with his mind's eye see it as it was first made, with the jungle still wild around it.

"The critic, if he is studying an old work, a classic, a book well read by all the world, must think away all the accretions of time and other men's study—all the second hand ideas that have been made to cluster round it by long familiarity in the classroom, or through text-book commentary, or pulpit allusion and yet must not fail to use so much as history can tell him to enable him to reconstruct the life of which the author wrote. Or if it is a modern book which he is studying, he must think away all the irrelevancies with which slight acquaintance or gossip may have encumbered the subject ; he must be able to brush aside the commonplace which obscures the

character of the too familiar, and makes it difficult for a weak-mind to distinguish the unconventional which is true from the eccentric which is factitious and perverse. It is his business to follow that track as the author designed and made it, viewing the country through which it runs, and test it for what it is.

"But the reader does not begin just where the writer does. The latter starts from life itself, or rather some tract of life. His awareness of it sorts itself into a form. He adds impressions to impressions, which enrich one another by amplifying the view, showing up striking relationships, subduing some element which should be slight, throwing forward another which should be conspicuous. He sees his end across the jungle, and has to get through to it. But at the last his work emerges, exhibited to whosoever will examine it in the form of a word-structure—the sole expression of all that he has laboured to create.

"From that word-structure the critic starts. He must go back over the road. And when he has travelled over it—over that finished way he will come at last to that tract of life from which the author started. There at least, if there is to be understanding, author and critic must stand together on common ground.

"The critic must have some knowledge of the tract of life from which the creative writer starts. That is to say he must have understanding of what we call life itself. Above all, if the book be a play or a novel, he must know not a little about human nature, the raw material upon which the theme is built. He must be acquainted with the objects, as Burke said, which are to be represented; and if they are to affect his consciousness as they have affected the artist, he must have some of the

same sensibility to ideas.

"So far it has been for the artist to lead. He has chosen the field of life which he is to attend to ; he has made the theme ; he is fashioning it. But at this point the critic may part company with him and may even venture to take the lead. The artist as we have seen is asking him to agree. Life (with that all-extended signification we have given to it) is like this, and like that ; 'This is the manner in which it may be characterized.' But the critic, to whose gaze human existence is stretched out as it was for the other, may say : 'No starting where you start, it must be like this, or like that, and never so, as you have shown it.' For the moment the critic has become creator ; he has almost begun to show him what he should write. His appreciation involves an active reconstruction of all that the artist has done, and at times it must turn into a positive construction of his own in which he begins to go his separate way.

"What purpose we may ask, does the critic serve ? His first task serves no purpose beyond simple appreciation. Appreciation is all that is demanded of a reader, expressed it may be by a nod of intelligent acquiescence, or a shake of the head when something has gone wrong. In proportion as he is moved to burst into self-expression, his is the voice of the public answering the writer, acknowledging the communication, declaring how it is understood, and what impression it is making.

"But when he goes further, and puts himself more intimately at the viewpoint of the author, examining the subject, the treatment, the technique, the spirit expressed, the form his is joined to the voices which reveal literature in the act of becoming self-conscious about itself. It

matters not whether the literature considered be of the past or the present. If it is of the past, each fresh effort to understand and place it means that so much belonging to the past has been reabsorbed and brought into the present, entering with something of its old original force into the life current of modern culture. If it is of the present, it means that so much new fire that is being kindled to-day is being made to do work, so much fresh energy is being caught up and handed on to the extent that this mind, and another, and yet others are able to participate in it.

"The critic cannot be silent. But he is many things. Now his is the voice of the reader in active response. Now he is the creative writer justifying or explaining a certain method. Now he is one entering the fray where ideas are tossed to and fro, standing on some vantage ground where his voice will be heard and exercise some possible perceptible influence on the spirit of his time. He may set himself deliberately at some central point in the movement, and aim, like Arnold, at establishing a current of fresh and true ideas, not content to define and interpret this and that example of fine work, but going forth with a Crusader's lance in his hand to make truth and seriousness, the best that is known and thought in the world, prevail.

"The critic may be the quiet, just appreciator. He may be the interpreter, or the censor. He may be the artist, discoursing about himself and his kind. He may be the elucidator, affording clues to the language, or explaining ideas which the author has taken for granted. He may be the curious explorer. Or he may be the definer, who in declaring just what a work is gives it also

its place in the succession or contemporaneity of ideas. He may be the constructive historian, who tells how the history of society has affected art, and the influence of the arts has modified society. He may be the literary propagandist eager to push the best that there is in literature either for the sake of literature or for the sake of humanity, or both. But whichever of these he may be, there is one viewpoint at which he must always begin, and to which he must always return—that from which the man of letters, an artist, addresses himself with a single mind to the task of construing life into an image which will convince us and delight. From this, the artist's point of view, he must never be far distant. "To judge of poets is only the faculty of poets."

4. Plato.

In the fourth century B. C. for the first time solid and lasting work was done in the field of criticism in Greece. The pioneer of this work was Plato. Referring to this Atkins has observed in his book, *Literary Criticism in Antiquity* : 'Plato came first and was succeeded by Socrates, Aristotle, and Theophrastus ; and in their works were set forth some of the most momentous pronouncements on literature, doctrines which were to exercise men's minds down to the present day. It was a time of political decline and dissolution in which nevertheless the intellectual supremacy of Athens was finally established. By the beginning of the century the wonderful flowering time of Greek art was over, and the creative impulse had practically ceased. An age of reflexion followed, in which philosophers and orators were the leading spirits ; and with the discovery of the new dialectic which

put an end to the earlier speculative thinking, with the perfecting also of an artistic prose, efforts were made to explore the whole realm of knowledge, and incidentally some of the outstanding problems of a literary kind. To the fostering of these activities had gone more than one consideration; chief among which was undoubtedly the example of Socrates, who had thought men to think and to seek for truth in disinterested fashion. Further impetus was also derived from the confusion which prevailed in all spheres of the national life, in matters political, moral and educational ; and of these things the obvious deterioration of the Athenian spirit was a constant and bitter reminder. Such then was the movement of which Plato was in a sense the pioneer ; for during the first half of the century he practically monopolises the scene. A follower of Socrates, with his master's preoccupation with social morality, with something too of his master's skill in the matter of dialectic, though richly endowed as well with literary gifts of his own, he was well equipped for the part he was destined to play both in the opening up of philosophical thought, and in the inauguration of a new phase in the critical development."

The two important critical theories of Plato about poetry are the theory of 'Inspiration' and the theory of 'Imitation'. Referring to Plato's theory of inspiration, Daiches has observed in his book, *Critical Approaches to Literature* : "The poet was a possessed creature, not using language in the way that normal human beings do, but speaking in a divinely inspired frenzy. Such a view removed the poet from ordinary canons of judgment, and made him something between a prophet and a madman—sometimes one, sometimes the other, and sometimes

both. There was, of course, a very primitive element in this view—the prophet working himself up into a frenzy before becoming possessed and delivering the word of God is a common enough notion in early stages of civilization—but nevertheless the view could be developed with deliberate sophistication in order to put the poet beyond the reach of philosophic censure. Plato suggests this view in a passage in his Phaedrus.

> The third kind is the madness of those who are possessed by the Muses; this enters into a delicate and virgin soul, and there inspiring frenzy, awakens lyrical and all other numbers! with these adorning the myriad actions of ancient heroes for the instruction of posterity. But he who, having no touch of the Muse's madness in his soul, comes to the door and thinks that he will get into the temple by the help of art,—he, I say and his poetry are not admitted; the sane man is nowhere at all when he enters into rivalry with the madman.

"Plato develops this view at greater length in his *Ion*, in which the poet is presented as the inspired rhapsodist through whom God speaks, a man lacking art and volition of his own, a passive vehicle merely. In this dialogue Socrates is speaking to Ion:

> The gift which you possess... is not an art, but, as I was just saying, an inspiration; there is a divinity moving you, like that contained in the stone which Euripides calls a magnet, but which is commonly known as the stone of Heraclea. This stone not only attracts iron rings, but also imparts to them a similar power of attracting other rings; and sometimes you may see a number of pieces of iron and ring suspended from one another so as to form quite a long chain; and all of them derive their power of suspension from the original stone. In like manner the Muse first of all inspires men herself; and

from these inspired persons a chain of other persons is suspended, who take the inspiration from them. For all good poets epic as well as Lyric, compose their beautiful poems not by art, but because they are inspired and possessed. And as the Corybantian revellers when they dance are not in their right mind, so the lyric poets are not in their right mind when they are composing their beautiful strains but when falling under the power of music and meter they are inspired and possessed; like Bacchic maidens who draw milk and honey from the rivers when they are under influence of Dionysus, but not when they are in their right mind. And the soul of the lyric poet does the same, they themselves say; for they tell us that they bring songs from honeyed fountains, culling them ont of the gardens and dens of the Muses; winging their way there from flower to flower like the bees. And this is true. For the poet is a light and winged and holy thing and there is no invention in him until he has been inspired and is cut of his senses, and the mind is no longer in him; when he has not attained to this state, he is powerless and is unable to utter his oracles. Many are the noble words in which poets speak concerning the actions of men; but like yourself when speaking about Homer, they do not speak of them by any rules of art; they are simply inspired to utter that to which the Muse impels them, and that only; and when inspired one of them will make dithyrambs, another hymns of praise, another choral strains, another epic or iambic verses—and he who is good at one is not good at any other kind of verse: for not by art does the poet sing, but by power divine. Had he learned by rules of art, he would have known how to speak not of one theme only, but of all; and therefore God takes away the minds of poets, and uses them as his ministers, as he also uses diviners and holy prophets, in order that we who hear them may know them to be speaking not of themselves who utter these priceless words in a state of unconsciousness, but the God himself is the speaker, and

> that through them he is conversing with us. And Tynnichus the Chalcidian affords a striking instance of what I am saying : he wrote nothing that anyone would care to remember but the famous paean which is in every one's mouth, one of the finest poems ever written, simply an invention of the Muses, as he himself says. For in this way the God would seem to indicate to us and not allow us to doubt that these beautiful poems are not human, or the work of man, but divine and the work of God : and that the poets are only the interpreters of the God by whom they are severally possessed. Was not this the lesson which the God intended to teach when by the mouth of the worst of poets he sang the best of songs ?

"Ion is a rhapsodist who recites and embellishes the works of the great poets. The poet is inspired by the God, and the rhapsodist is inspired by the poet, and so the magnetic chain develops. There is a certain amount of irony in the way Socrates makes Ion admit that he is not in his right mind when he recites and interprets Homer. "Are you not carried out of yourself, and does not your soul in an ecstasy seem to be among the persons or places of which she is speaking, whether they are in Ithaca or in Troy or whatever may be the scene of the poem ?" And Ion replies, "That proof strikes home to me, Socrates. For I must confess that at the tale of pity my eyes are filled with tears, and when I speak of horrors, my hair stands on end and my heart throbs." "Well, Ion", Socrates replies, "and what are we to say of a man who at a sacrifice or festival, when he is dressed in holiday attire, and has gold crowns upon his head, of which nobody has robbed him, appears weeping or panic-stricken in the presence of more than twenty thousand friendly faces, when there is no one spoiling or wronging him ;—is

he in his right mind or is he not ?" "No indeed, Socrates", Ion has to concede ; "I must say that strictly speaking he is not his right mind.'' Socrates then points out that Ion's performance produces a similar effect on the spectators, who thus also become inspired :

> Do you know that the spectator is the last of rings which, as I am saying, derive their power from the original magnet ; and the rhapsode like yourself and the actors are intermediate links, and the poet himself is the first link of all ? And through all these the God sways the soul of men in any direction which he pleases, and makes one man hang down from another. There is also a chain of dancers and masters and under masters of bands who are suspended at the side, and are the rings which hang from the Muse. And every poet has a Muse from whom he is suspended and by whom he is said to be possessed, which is nearly the same thing ; for he is taken possession of.

"Socrates then discusses whether the inspired reciter and interpreter of the poets can judge better of any given matter treated by the poet than the expert in that subject can (for example, can the rhapsodist or the general judge more effectively whether Homer correctly presents the art of war ?) and after confusing poor Ion badly on this subject (and no wonder, for in putting the question thus, Socrates begs the fundamental question concerning the difference between *Dichtung* and *Wahrheit*, between poetry and science) forces him to choose between accepting the charge of dishonesty or admitting that he knows nothing himself but recites and interprets through a process of inspiration.

"The *Ion* is the most elaborate presentation in the ancient world of the notion of poetry as pure inspiration—

a notion which has had a long history, has gone through many modifications, and which survives today. "Great wits are sure to madness near alli'd," wrote Dryden in his Absalom and Achitophel two thousand years later, and nearly a hundred years before Dryden Shakespeare had noted that

> The lunatic, the lover and the poet
> Are of imagination all compact......

"It is possible, of course, that Plato wrote the *Ion* as well as the passage in the *Phaedrus* with his tongue in his cheek. Certainly, the view of poetry he presented in Book X of the *Republic* is very different, though this fact does not mean much, for a philosopher, like anybody else, has a perfect right to change his mind. But the note of irony which is sustained throughout the *Ion* and the way in which Socrates makes a fool out of Ion suggests that Plato was emphasizing the difference between the poet and the philosopher, wholly to the advantage of the latter. Further meditation of this distinction may well have led him to the positions he maintains in the *Republic*.

"It is significant that the theory of inspiration which Plato presents in the *Ion* says nothing about the poet's lying ; he is speaking divine truths, but Plato does not go to say that divine truths may sometimes appear to the ordinary human mind as literal untruths. The *Ion* assumes, indeed, that what the poet speaks of is the true and the beautiful, so that we can hardly say that Plato takes refuge in the theory of inspiration in order to vindicate the poet against the charge of lying or irresponsibility. As Plato developed his moral ideas further, he may well have come to ponder more and more the poet's moral responsibility, and some such development of

this thought, together with further meditation on the war between poet and philosopher, may be the explanation of the famous charge brought against the poet in book X of the *Republic*."

Referring to Plato's theory of 'imitation, and his attack on poetry' Scott-James has observed in his book, *The Making of Literature* : "Looking at the matter, then, from the first, the social, point of view, Plato is interested in literature, or art, only insofar as its influence is beneficial in moulding the life of the good citizen. None other is to be allowed to contaminate his state. It shall be no argument that a poem or poet is charming, admirable, or even sacred—vain arguments of aesthetes—if the teaching is not such as the Guardians prescribe. He establishes an unrelenting censorship, and the principles upon which it will operate are clearly laid down in Books II, and III.

"And so he launches his attack on Homer and Hesiod and the other poets who have followed their example. Can the Guardians of the State allow the poets to misrepresent the gods, and show them as revengeful, or lustful, or cruel, or as waging war among themselves ? Can they allow God, who is good, to be described as the author of evil ? Can they permit the gods to be shown as assuming fictitious shapes, or telling paltry lies, or in any way demeaning themselves ? It is intolerable that falsehoods should be told about the next world, and that it should be reviled in pitiful accounts of death and suffering. Nor is it right that the poets should describe honoured heroes like Achilles or Priam as indulging in weak lamentations, or using insolent language, or as being gluttonous, vengeful or choleric. Nor can the Guardians allow citizens

to 'imitate' the words or actions of inferior men. For the good man will be unwilling to imitate any but the noblest characters.

"Homer and Hesiod, then, are convicted of immoral teachings, and the tragedians and comedians are condemned because they imitate unworthy objects. In the ideal State there is no place for them. Let them be crowned with fillets—let perfumed oil be poured on their heads—but they must be sent on to another city. Plato has taken up his stand on the side of the most ascetic of the Puritans. The more lovely and fascinating the arts may seem, the more deadly they may be in luring us to false views of life or the emasculating influence of emotion.

"But he is not content to leave the argument there. As a moralist he has disapproved of poetry because it is immoral. As a philosopher he disapproves of it because it is based on falsehood. His ideal man as a citizen pursues the moral ideal; as an individual, he is intent upon the pursuit of truth. But the arts deal in illusion.

"The artist, he finds, is concerned with appearance only or rather the appearance of appearance. He deals with the world which we apprehend with our eyes and ears, the world of seeming in which each object as perceived comes and goes, now seeming large, now small, now hot relatively to this, cold relatively to that, sweet at one moment, sour at another—always changing, many, illusory, whereas the real is Unchanging and One. There are many appearances which we call red things, but only one Redness, the idea behind it; and there are many appearances which we call beautiful things, but only one Absolute Beauty, the reality apprehended by the mind.

It is the appearances which the artist imitates not the Reality.

"The bed or the chair which the carpenter makes is an appearance only, not a reality. There cannot be more than one real, or ideal bed, for if there were more, each would presuppose as the form or idea, which made it what it was, an absolute bed behind itself. The carpenter can make no more than an imitation of the reality and the bed he makes is once removed from the truth. But the painter's bed is twice removed. For he does not imitate the reality, made by God, but the imitation, made by the carpenter. His work therefore is no more than an imitation of an imitation.

"And in like manner the poet, using not paint, but verbs and nouns and rhythms—appealing to the ear, where the other appealed to the eye—can re-create no more than a weak imitation of phantoms, appearances, unsubstantial images. He too creates only a copy of a copy. His subject and his methods are false. He appeals not to the reason, but to the emotions. He excites, feeds and strengthens the most worthless part of the soul, appealing to those unrestrained sentiments and disordered impulses which in ordinary life we should be ashamed to indulge.

"Homer and Hesiod, then, must be banished. Tragedy and comedy must go. If we permit poetry at all, it must be confirmed to hymns to the gods, and verses in praises of noble men."

Referring to the contribution of Plato to Criticism, Scott-James has observed : "We can easily detect the error that Plato falls into [in his theory of art. We are unable to accept his conclusions. None the less he has

helped to clear the ground. He has made some valid distinctions. He has given us some important starting points.

"To him we owe the first statement of the mimetic, or imitative, character of art. The painter or the poet is not one who simply makes 'something beautiful'. He imitates or represents what we call reality, what Plato calls phenomena—objects which are at least real to our five senses—in a word, life.

"And the artist represents in such a way as to give pleasure—it is the sweetness, or pleasurableness, of his fictions that makes them, in his view, so dangerous.

"He makes use, moreover, of various media, the painter using paint, the sculptor stone, the poet words.

"And when in the use of this medium he copies a real object he must be content to give just that aspect of reality which can be represented through that medium. A real bed has many properties and many parts which cannot be shown in a picture. Therefore the painter can produce no more than an aspect of the bed. His picture is something less than the original, and to that extent inferior. Plato did not inquire in what way it may also be something *more*.

"Having got thus far, we observe that he has discovered a real community between all the fine arts. A poet who makes a poem and a painter who paints a picture are engaged in the same sort of activity. They do not use the same medium, but otherwise they are engaged on the same task, even though Plato thinks of this merely as the task of copying in the same delusive way, things that are not worth copying ; pleasing men by giving them the same sort of perilous pleasure ; seducing them by appeal-

ing in like manner to their emotions.

"Having recognized the form that is implicit in a bed or a chair, we might have hoped that he would examine the form that makes a poem or a picture what it is. Having seen that the artist's medium was different from the original, we might have hoped that he would have exclaimed with Homer : 'And this was a very miracle of his craft.' But his preoccupation with other activities of the soul—the purely intellectual—and with other problems of life—the purely ethical—stood in the way. Was it that he lived in the only State in the world in which, among the higher activities, the arts exercised more than their due share of influence, and that the spectacle of many disasters of unbalanced temperament filled him with disgust ? We only know that his sympathy was withdrawn, his imagination and his thought were not turned with their full illuminating force on to just this, the distinctive problem of the arts ; and his example leads us to reflect that often perhaps philosophy is not so much a logical avenue to truth as a logical justification of those constructions of experience which belong to intuition, and are liable to be twisted by prejudice."

Referring to the importance of Plato in the History of Criticism, Atkins has observed in his book *Literary Criticism in Antiquity* : "Yet mere list of theories or an analysis of his methods by no means explains fully the value of Plato's performance ; nor does it account for his enduring influence down to the present day. For that we must look to the supreme quality of his achievement which lay in the unerring certainty with which he grasped fundamentals passing instinctively to the heart of an inquiry, and bringing to light truths of a profound and permanent

kind. Of these some instances have already been given; his recognition of the need for a logic of art, and for that organic fusion which goes by the name of unity; or again, the emphasis laid on clear thinking as a necessary preliminary to artistic expression. But his work is full of these far reaching and penetrating pronouncements, often implied or hinted at in some general discussion. Thus he is the first to recognise adequately the mysterious power of poetry, its inexhaustible vitality and its faculty of communicating life. It is true that he chooses for its illustration the radiating influence of a magnet, whereas to Milton the virtue was that of the 'precious life-blood of a master-spirit'. Yet in the minds of both the same idea was present and it constitutes one of the deepest truths concerning literature. Or again, there is his reinterpretation of the traditional 'poetic madness'. This he takes to mean the emotional element present in all great art, and capable at its best of vision beyond the ken of reason; yet another of those ideas that lie at the root of our modern aesthetics, and which are present in Wordsworth's familiar description of poetry as 'the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'. Then, too, of the first importance is his advocacy of a poetry based on an imitation of the ideal world, and produced in the light of ideal knowledge. Here he would seem to have had in mind a poetry of a philosophic kind, having for its subject-matter the ideal forms of justice, truth, and beauty. Yet in this demand were embodied yet other fundamental principles, namely, that poetry at its best should deal with what was great and noble in human nature, and that, further, it should embody truth of a permanent and universal kind. It remained for Aristotle to show that such universal truth

could be, and was attained through the particular by the poet ; but the demand for an apprehension of reality had first been made by Plato. Nor must we forget, above all, his illuminating remarks on the essential virtue of art, more particularly in its relation to human life. Indeed nowhere is his vision more penetrating or convincing ; and his estimate still remains perhaps the most adequate pronouncement on the subject. Thus to him art is first and foremost an influence, not a means of instruction ; it is said to aim primarily at moulding character and not at imparting moral principles or doctrines. And upon this he enlarges in more than one place. The first business of art, he explains, is to open men's eyes to the beauty of things to what is great and noble in human nature ; and then with its gracious effluences it invades men's souls, and like some health-giving breeze, it nurtures in them what is good and noble. The same idea is present in his description of the process as a turning of the soul's eye to the light. And here again there is, no question of direct teaching, but rather of bringing out the best that was latent in the soul by directing it to right ends. Elsewhere, it is true, there is a suggestion of the imparting of knowledge, where an acquaintance with the reflected world of art is said to enable men to read more correctly the world around them, by helping them to discern qualities of excellence wherever they are found. But even here what is claimed to be imparted is a right sense of values, not moral doctrine ; and in point of fact, Plato is as far removed from later moralistic theorists, as he is from those who advocated an 'Art for Art's sake'.

"It is, therefore, in such places as these that real greatness of Plato as a critic is perhaps best seen. And views-

ing his work as a whole, it may fairly be said that with him literary theory really begins. What he did was to make later criticism possible; he set men thinking, he gave inspiration and direction to critical effort, and at the same time he supplied ideals for generations to come. Nor must we forget the challenging nature of many of his utterances; for this fact undoubtedly gave further stimulus to criticism. It is true that he left not a few problems for later discussion; among others, the question of terminology, the meaning of 'imitation' and the like. At the same time, as we have seen, he was something more than a mere pathfinder. He stands for something positive and constructive in the critical sphere. His findings and his methods alike are of great and permanent value; he placed criticism from the first on an exalted plane; and he has something to say to all the ages. After he had written, the beneficent character of art had been once for all revealed. Poetry ceased to be regarded as mere technique, and became instead one of the loftiest and most mysterious of human activities; and in the meantime, the foundations of a higher rhetoric had also been laid. Yet valuable as was his teaching, his influence proved to be more subtle and enduring still. Formerly described as 'the father of the greatest of critical heresies,' today he is more fairly regarded as 'the fountain of that which is most living in the orthodoxy of later ages.' Right down to recent times, his ideas of poetry have acted as an unfailing stimulus to men's minds, leading them from the formal, the pedantic, and the petty, turning their eyes to the things that really matter, and causing them to rebel against the tyranny of the rule. And his influence remains to the present day, that of one of the greatest of critics, in the

truest sense a light-bringer, ever guiding men's steps to the spiritual side of art."

5. Aristotle

Aristotle, though Plato's pupil, had fundamental differences with his master. In his *Poetics*, which is not only the first thoroughly philosophical discussion of literature, but the foundation of all subsequent criticism, Aristotle refuted many of the theories of Plato. Referring to the difference between Plato and Aristotle, Atkins has observed in his book, *Literary Criticism in Antiquity* : "The same period which had produced in Plato one of the great masters of criticism witnessed also the arrival of another outstanding genius in the person of Aristotle, a pupil of the earlier philosopher, whose work he was to develop on lines of his own, thereby bringing to light in connection with art leading principles of great and permanent value. The achievements of the two critics differed as the men themselves in their objectives, their geniuses, and their methods of work. Plato had set out to reorganise human life ; he was a transcendentalist, a poet, whose splendidly suggestive *a priori* theories were presented indirectly in dialogues of enduring charm, and who wrote with an eye to the social needs of the state. Aristotle's aim, on the other hand, was to reorganise human knowledge ; he was a scientist, an experimentalist, one who arrived at his principles by observation and analysis and who normally set forth his theories in direct dogmatic fashion, but without any of the charm of Plato's work. Yet while there are clear differences, there is also between the two critics a close connection as well. Aristotle throughout his work is covertly criticising Plato ; his mind is filled with Platonic

ideas; and everywhere in discussions he draws upon Plato's doctrines, and terminology, reinterpreting or confuting, while engaged in developing new doctrines of his own."

An important contribution of Aristotle to literary criticism is his defence of poetry against the attack on it by Plato, who condemned it on the ground of its being an 'imitation'. Explaining Aristotle's defence Abercrombie has observed in his book, *Principles of Literary Criticism*: "It was an imitation that the Greek mind naturally explained the existence of what we call art (meaning 'fine art') and Aristotle inevitably made this elementary notion the starting point of his theory. The originality of his theory consists in the direction its argument took from this notion. The easy and obviously inviting way to argue from it would be to say that art imitates nature ; art, then, is the skilled copying or mimicry of the objects we know in the world. This was the popular way of arguing ; and it was also Plato's way. It enables him, in conjunction with *his theory of ideas* (which, however, he had to strain somewhat for the purpose) to give a plausibly reasoned form to his disparagement of poetry—indeed, of art in general. The accusation he brought against poetry was as complete as it could be ; the nature of poetry, he said, was wholly unworthy of serious attention; the function of poetry was radically vicious. This latter charge will be described later ; at present, we are concerned with his attack on the nature of poetry—on poetry, namely, as *imitation*. Aristotle, too, in the early part of his treatise, was no doubt concerned with poetry ; and he meets the accusation of consequent unworthiness by giving a completely different interpretation of the whole notion of imitation in poetry. Aristotle's way of interpreting poetic imitation in possibly

most valuable of all his contributions to aesthetic theory. At any rate, it puts the theory on perfectly secure and solid foundations.

All the 'fine arts' are connected. It suited the tactics of Plato's attack on the art of poetry to approach it through the art of painting ; for the notion that imitation is mimicry is most easily supported in painting. The attack went thus. The only business worthy of man's mind is his concern with reality. Men should be concerned with 'things' for their reality ; and their reality is given to them by the ideas they represent. Now a painter imitates things ; and things represent ideas ; and ideas are reality. Painting, therefore, only deals with reality at third hand. Thus, in the famous example, there are many beds in the world ; but beds only exist because the idea of bed exists. When a carpenter makes a bed, he may be said to copy the one original and universal bed, the ideal bed which (Plato's theory does not shrink from this) was created by God ; by which he means, of course, that the ideal is the only truly real. The carpenter's is a necessary and entirely worthy occupation. And now along comes the painter, and copies the bed which the carpenter made; that is to say, he copies the copy of the real bed ; an unnecessary, and entirely unworthy occupation. And as it is with painters so it is with poets (Plato, like Aristotle, is thinking chiefly of epic and dramatic poets). The painter copies objects, the poet copies the behaviour of men and women ; both artists copy appearances in the world of things, and their work is therefore twice removed from reality.

"This abstract does not, of course, do justice to the humour, gusto, good nature, and persuasiveness with

which Plato's inimitable art conducts the argument ; but it may serve to show the strain which the argument puts on the theory of ideas. And yet, if we grant that that theory may include particular objects (and even artifacts, such as beds) and if we grant that imitation in art means mimicry, the logic is sound enough. The attack at any rate, is not one that can be ignored; and we must remember that Plato's attack on the nature of poetry prepared the way for a weightier assault on its function. How then is this first assault to be met ? Aristotle in the *Poetics*, leaves the theory of ideas alone ; for it can do nothing here without the theory that poetry imitates nature, in the sense of mimicry. It will suffice to show that poetry does not imitate nature. And to show this Aristotle does not appeal to *a priori* notions ; he appeals, as a good naturalist will always do, to the facts. He does not do this directly, however ; the facts of the case are implied by the nature of his argument. But they are obvious enough. It may seem easy and inviting theory to say that art is the mirror of nature ; but since we can see nature herself what do we want with a mirror ? If poetry merely mirrored nature, it could give us no more than nature gives us ; but the fact is, that we enjoy poetry precisely because it gives us something which nature does not give us. We may say, for example, that the persons in dramatic poetry are 'like like' ; but where in actual life shall we find such persons—persons who are interesting in everything they do or say, persons who continually and inevitably reveal both themselves and the events in which they live ? The figures of such persons do not imitate nature ; and this is typical of poetry in general. What then does poetry imitate ?—But we had better follow

Aristotle's arguments.

"Poetry, he begins, is a mode of imitation. But instead of saying, as Plato does, that in this respect it is like painting, Aristotle says that it is like music or dancing. This is significant ; for painting suggests (though quite falsely) imitation in the sense of mimicry. But the mention of music and dancing is a preliminary warning, that whatever imitation in poetry may mean, it does not mean mimicry. For what mimicry is there in music ? And, though dancing may represent passion and action, its formal rhythms and deliberate graces certainly do not copy natural gesture and movement. Aristotle then proceeds, by means of three-fold classification, to narrow down the general notion of imitation to the particular topics of his treatise. He asks, in effect, three questions : In what does the imitation exist ? What does it imitate ? How does it imitate ? That is, he classifies imitation according to its medium, its *object*, and its *manner*.

"The medium of the kind of imitation with which he is concerned is, of course, language. And here he makes a remarkable reflection. He notes that the art he is to discuss has,as regards its medium, properly speaking—no name—no name, at least, comparable for exact and generally agreed meaning with such names as 'sculpture' or 'music'. And this is still true today. For purposes of discussion, we may use the word 'poetry' for the pure art of literature. But, says Aristotle, people connect the idea of poetry with a particular kind of rhythm in language. Yet the nature of poetry is not given by metrical rhythm. Compositions which are designed to instruct or inform may be written in metre ; but they are not therefore poetry ; in his terminology, they do not *imitate* anything. On the

other hand, compositions may be very successful imitations (to us, 'representations' would sound more familiarly) without being written in metre. The contrast, then is not between poetry and prose ; for this simply marks a difference in technique ; the true contrast is between literature which 'imitates' and that which does not ; and either of these two classes may be written in metrical language. Thus Aristotle is the first critic to point out that the essential nature of poetry may often be found in prose ; and on the contrary, that verse is no guarantee of poetry. This short digression indicates that in the sequel his discussion of a particular kind of poetry is a type of the theory of pure literature in general.

"'Having thus limited his topic to what, for want of a more specific term, we must call pure literature, he goes on to classify this with respect to the object of the imitation. In general, he says, the object of poetic imitation is *men in action*; which, remembering his exclusion of lyrical poetry, will be found an adequate description. For by *men in action* he does not necessarily mean *men doing things ;* he means *things happening in terms of human nature, events embodied in human lives.* In a word, he means a *story*, in the widest possible sense : and the essential element in a story is the human element. The objects of poetic imitation, then, may be classified according to the nature of the human element in them ; and we judge human nature by its goodness or badness. Poetry, then, may represent men as better than in real life, as worse, or as they are. This third variant Aristotle merely mentions, and then ignores ; he is wholly concerned with the other two. The poetry he is to discuss imitates men either as being better than in real life, or as being worse. The

purpose of this classification is to derive from one common impulse the two main kinds of non-lyrical poetry, tragic and comic ; and as such it may be provisionally allowed. There is a sense in which a tragic character is better than real life, and a comic character worse. Real people do not exemplify in such capital fashion the qualities which make human nature admirable, nor those which make it ridiculous. Yet this rough sort of classification involves serious difficulties. Tragic characters are not necessarily morally better than in real life : witness Macbeth. But if they are said to be better in the sense of being more imposing and remarkable, may not the same thing be said of comic characters also ? Witness Falstaff.

"But one thing remains quite unquestionable in this second classification of Aristotle's : poetic imitation does not mean mimicry. How can poetry imitate men as better or as worse than real life ? Obviously, not by copying nature ; but only by imitating imagination. The theoretical possibility that poetry *might* represent men 'as they are,' we have seen, mentions only to ignore ; no doubt because he did not think it worth discussing. For this possibility is not characteristic of poetry. This is not what we demand of poetry ; and, therefore, as a matter of practical fact, this is not what poetry does. We do no want at a transcription from nature, since we have the original always before us ; we want an imaginative reconstruction of the possibilities of nature.

"Plato took imitation to be the connexion between poetry and nature ; which leaves quite unexplained the characteristic quality and energy of poetry (whether in verse or in prose, whether an epic or a novel). Aristotle, with far finer discrimination, saw that the connection

effected by imitation is not between poetry and the world without, but falls wholly within the being of poetry. Poetry is not connected with the outside world in the simple and direct fashion supposed by Plato. The poet first derives an inspiration from the world by the power of his imagination ; the art of poetry then imitates this imaginative inspiration in language. Aristole's theory is not really concerned with the nature of the originating connexion between poetry and the world, except by certain plain implications in the argument throughout, and for one anomalous digression to be noted presently. His discussion is 'Concerning the art of Poetry'. The art exists to give shape and substance to a certain kind of imaginative impulse : the existence of the art implies the existence of the impulse. Aristotle in discussing the art, assumes the existence of the impulse; his business is to discuss its nature, and the way it works itself out into the language. But to enquire into the connexion between poetry and the world is to enquire into the origin of this impulse; and the questions how and why it arose belong rather to psychology than to aesthetics. Now it is just possible to imagine life exactly as it is ; but the exciting thing is to imagine life as it might be, and it is then that imagination becomes an impulse capable of inspiring poetry. This is true even in the case of what we call realism in literature ; it is true even when the life imagined was originally an actuality of some highly exciting nature in itself. Imagination may do not more than concentrate the actuality, by dropping out all its insignificant passages. But that will be enough to make the resultant poetry (or literature) something quite different from that copy of the world which Plato's condemnation assumed it to be.

"Thus, what Aristotle means by 'imitation' in poetry is exactly what we mean by *technique*. Poetic imitation, as Aristotle uses the word everywhere in his theory (with the exception of an unimportant chapter which really forms no part of his theory), does not explain the origin of poetry, nor what the connexion is between poetry and real things and affairs. Aristotle's 'imitation' is confined entirely to the poetic activity within the art itself ; it describes the connexion between poetic impulse and poetic language. It is his word for the technique by which the poet finally achieves communicable expression of his imaginative inspiration. We say 'finally achieves'; for, whether the word be 'technique' or 'imitation" more is involved than the mere management of language as we shall soon see."

Aristotle also refuted the charge of Plato that poetry has an immoral influence on men by his consideration of Tragedy. Referring to this and explaining Aristotle's view of Tragedy Worsfold has observed in his book, *The Principles of Criticism* : "Aristotle also finds a reply to the second charge—that poetry pleased and fostered the irrational and emotional part of man's nature to the detriment of the nobler intellectual element—in a dry illustration from the science of medicine which he attached to his definition of tragedy. Tragedy......is an imitation of a serious and complete action which has magnitude. The imitation is effected by embellished language, each kind of embellishment varying in the constituent parts. It is acted, not narrated ; and it uses the agency of pity and fear to effect a purging of these and the like emotions. That is to say, just as humours are carried out of the physical system by medical treatment, so the

moral system of the spectator is relieved of an excess of emotion, when emotion is artificially excited in the performance of the tragedy. To work upon the emotional element in man was, therefore, part of the proper function of the art of poetry, and the effect of this appeal to the emotions was equally beneficial and not hurtful.

"But these replies to Plato occur incidentally, and not in the form of comments upon certain aspects of poetry which arise in the course of his general argument.

"In addressing himself to the consideration of poetry as branch of art, Aristotle first lays down certain elementary characteristics of the process of imitation which are common to art and, therefore, appear in all forms of poetry, or creative literature. Having thus cleared the ground, he proceeds to examine the structure and methods of the form of poetry, tragedy, which might, or might not, represent the ultimate, development of the art, but which, at any rate, contained all the elements found in any known form of poetic composition. These elements are six in number. There is the plot, or contexture of incidents ; the character, or that by which we distinguish the natures of the persons ; the diction in which their thoughts are expressed ; the sentiment which animates them ; the stage representation ; and the music by which the songs of the chorus are accompanied. Of these, the plot, which is repeatedly asserted to be the most important, being successively termed the 'final aim ?' the 'soul' and the 'central principle' of tragedy, bears the same relation to the completed poem as the design of a painter bears to his picture.

"From this view of tragedy it follows that an ability

on the part of the composer to choose a suitable subject is an elementary necessity. That is to say the poet must know how to select so much human action, and human action of such a character, as admits of being effectively reproduced by the methods of art, and within the limits of the poetic composition in question. Aristotle, therefore, proceeds to state the rules for the composition of this all-important element. But in thus formulating rules for the construction of the plot with reference to the one form, tragedy, which he regards as the highest development of the art of poetry, he is careful to point out where they fail in their application to epic poetry.

"The first requirement of the plot is unity. 'As in the other imitative arts the one imitatión must have one subject, so too, the plot, since it is an imitation of an action, must be an imitation of an action that is one and whole, and its separate incidents must be so connected that if one is changed or removed the whole plot is altered and disturbed ; for a part which can be added or withdrawn without producing any effect is not a member of the whole.' It must also contain a powerful appeal to the emotions of pity and fear. In order to effect this there must be a change from good to bad fortune, and this change, or disaster, must be so managed to enlist the sympathies of the spectator in the highest degree.

"The change exhibited must neither be that of good men from good fortune to bad (for this does not arouse fear or pity but disgust) nor that of bad men from bad fortune to good (for this is furthest of all removed from the tragic ideal, for it has nothing that it ought to have ; it neither commands sympathy, nor pity, nor fear). Nor, again, should the change be that of as utterly worthless man suddenly hurled from good fortune to bad ; for a change so man a-

ged would command our sympathy without causing pity or fear. For of these two last emotions the former is felt in respect of undeserved misfortune, the latter in cases which resemble our own—pity because the suffering is undeserved ; fear because the persons who suffer resemble ourselves. And so the situation commands neither pity nor fear. An intermediate character remains. Such a character is one who without possessing conspicuous virtue or goodness, is overtaken by misfortune, not through vice or worthlessness, but through some defect, when he is at the height of his reputation and prosperity, as was the case with Oedipus and Thyestes and other notable members of the heroic families.

"Aristotle further distinguishes the kinds of plots, as simple' and 'complicated' ; 'single' and 'double' ; he characterises and discusses 'revolution', 'recognition', 'development,' and 'solution' ; gives rules rules for the length of the episodes and for their treatment in relation to the central action, and finally concludes with practical hints for the actual work of composing. It is unnecessary, however, for us to follow him further in this detailed examination, for a more enumeration of these heads is sufficient to indicate the character of criticism which it contains.

"To pass on to the remaining elements into which tragedy is analysed, the second element, character, appears to include any outward manifestation of the will. 'There will be character', he says, 'if the dialogue or the action reveals some principle of choice, of whatever kind ; and good character if this principle be good.' He then states, with illustrations, the four requisites of character; it must be good, that is, relatively good, appropriate, typical, and consistent. When Aristotle comes to discuss the next two elements, sentiment and diction, he feels that he is travel-

ding beyond the scope of his subject.

> "The principles involved in sentiment, he says, 'have been laid down in my treatise on rhetoric, for the subject is one which belongs more properly to that inquiry. It is concerned with all effects which ought to be produced by speech. These effects may be distinguished as proof, refutation, the production of the emotions of pity, fear, anger, and all such like ; to which must be added the art of heightening or extenuation the bare facts.

"Similarly, in treating of diction, he refers one branch of the subject to the actor's art ; and he then enters upon a discussion which is mainly grammatical. But he includes in this analysis of 'metaphor' and 'analogy,' and defines the limits within which the use of uncommon words, together with other forms of poetic licence, is permissible. As the enrichment of language is one of the means by which poetry produces its special charm, all this is appropriate enough. It is also worthy of notice that he rightly insists upon the value of metaphor. He pronounces it to be the greatest of these technical aids, and adds that 'it is proof of natural ability ; for to write good metaphors is to have an eye for analogies.'

"Of stage representation he says little ; but what he says is singularly to the point. It is enchanting, but it has the least artistic merit and is least closely connected with the art of poetry. 'And again, he remarks that it is possible to produce fear and pity by sights presented on the stage', but that the higher method is to produce such effects by 'the actual arrangement of the incidents' ; for 'to do this by means of the spectacle is inartistic and requires costly appliances.' Music, the remaining element, is 'the greatest of the embellishment.' It is not directly discussed, but in his account of the chorus he condemns

the practice of introducing songs which are unconnected with action of the tragedy.

"As tragedy contains all the elements of poetry the account of epic is naturally brief. It resolves itself into a statement of the modifications which must be made in applying the rules already given for the construction of the plot, and an examination of the respective merits of the two chief forms of poetry. Aristotle decides that the plot of an epic poem should in general be marked by the same characteristics as the plot of a tragedy, but it has less unity, in proportion as an epic has greater length than a tragedy. Moreover, the instrument of imitation is different; tragedy is 'imitation by action', Epic is 'narrative poetry, or imitation by verse.' The effect of this difference is seen in two ways. In the first place, the length of the episodes, and the importance of the subsidiary action, is increased; and in the second, the element of the marvellous can be more freely introduced. On the first point Aristotle remarks that, in epic poetry the fact that the imitation is effected by narrative makes it possible to represent the simultaneous progress of several divisions of the story, and by these divisions, provided they are relevant, the grandeur of the poem is increased. This is a quality with gives Epic a greater breadth of effect than Tragedy, for it provides variety by introducing contrast into the episodes. The second point is one which affects the selection of materials. In this respect the epic poet has greater scope than the tragic :

> "Tragedies should have an element of marvel, but in Epic there is more room for that improbability which forms so large an element in the marvellous, because the action is not before our eyes. The pursuit of Hector would appear absurd upon the stage—a crowd of Greek soldiers standing

> without attempting to pursue, and Achilles shaking his head—but in the poem the absurdity is not noticed.

"On the question of the relative merits of Epic and Tragedy as forms of poetry, he decides in favour of the latter."

> 'far it has all that Epic has—it can use the metre of Epic—and a very considerable addition in music and scenic accessories; and it is music which gives the greatest vividness to the combination of pleasurable emotions produced by Tragedy.'

Explaining Aristotle's conception of 'Katharsis' Diaches has remarked in his book, *Critical Approaches to Literature*: "One can fairly maintain that a whole view of the *value* of imaginative literature is implicit in Aristotle's discussion of the relation between poetry and history and the nature of literary probability. But he is not content with answering Plato's contention that art is but an imitation of an imitation, that removes from truth; he wishes also to answer specifically Plato's notion that art corrupts by nourishing the passions. His reply to this charge is simple and remarkable. Far from nourishing the passion,he asserts, it gives them harmless or even useful purgation; by exciting pity and fear in us, tragedy enables us to leave the theatre 'in calm of mind, all passion sent.' There is considerable disagreement among scholars and critics over what Aristotle really meant by *katharsis*, purgation, but it seems clear that he was claiming some kind of therapeutic value of tragedy. A tragedy not only communicates its own special insight (being more 'probable' and 'universal', than history and provides the satisfaction to be got from observing structural unity, but it also provides a safe outlet for disturbing passions which it effectively siphons off. Tragedy gives new knowledge,

yields aesthetic satisfaction, and produces a better state of mind. This triumvirate of values effectively disposes of Plato's attack."

Giving an estimate of Aristotle as a critic Atkins has observed in *Literary Criticism in Antiquity* : "Aristotle's Poetics is a comprehensive treatment of poetry, its nature and art, revealing many of the first principles of literary theory and the canons of the dramatic art, and constituting, besides, a valuable study of critical method, a mine of suggestive ideas, and one of the few pieces of systematic criticism that have come down from the ancient world. In form it is primarily a philosophical treatise ; but there is a sense in which it is also the first of the poetic 'arts,' and yet another in which it is the earliest 'Apology' for poetry. In it are also included elements of rhetoric, grammar and judicial criticism ; and these were elements which at a later date were to form separate studies. Of the defects of the work something has already been said—its unedited and mutilated form, its cryptic utterance, its ambiguities, its contradictions and omissions—and these are notoriously matters that brought confusion to later critical effort, and have taxed the scholarship of all ages. Other defects were in some measure the outcome of Aristotle's own qualities ; his scientific and logical bias for example which, while it enabled him to bring out the rational element of poetry, yet rendered him less capable of treating its aesthetic qualities. He does not altogether ignore the 'transport' of poetry ; but he is more concerned with it as reasoned utterance, with its structure and its thought rather than with its charm and colour ; and there is much in Greek poetry alone that escapes Aristotle's analysis. Then again in his philosophising a lack of free

speculation is perceptible ; it is as if his range was prescribed by the charges he had to meet. Of tragedy as an interpretation of life he says but little. He nowhere refers to the great problems that give vitality, to Greek tragedy, problems relating to man and his cosmic relations to the workings of fate, human destiny and the like. It would seem that he was merely careful to frame a reply to Plato's indictment ; and with this he is apparently for the most part content. For the skill, on the other hand, with which he employs his psychological methods, no praise can be too high. Their working is seen from beginning to end, from his early statement about the origin and development of poetry to his later deductions regarding the nature of tragedy. And yet here too, to our modern thinking, there is something vague and imperfect ; for he fails to recognise the part played by the imagination in all poetic activity. Elsewhere in his works he speaks of 'phantasia' as an image-forming faculty capable of reproducing images of sensible objects. But it is reproductive merely, without creative or transforming power. The idea of 'imagination' is to some extent implicit in his conception of 'imitation' and the fictional element in poetry ; but it is nowhere explicitly treated in Aristotleian theory.

"Nevertheless, in spite of shortcomings, the *Poetics* remains one of the greatest contributions to literary and critical theory, one of those rare books that have had lasting influence on the minds of men. With Aristotle came first the conception of theory as opposed to practice, of literary matter as opposed to literary form ; and, after he had written, the way was prepared for a further analysis of art, free from prejudices of an ethical or political kind. Among the more important of his pronouncements

is that in which poetry is defined as a concrete expression of the universal, and, therefore, representative of the highest truth ; though equally significant is his challenge of the ethical view of poetry, his contention that the poet's function is primarily to give pleasure. So that, from now on, there was no excuse for regarding poetry as a copy of reality or for confusing aesthetic with moral standards in judging art. Then, too, there is his theory of 'imitation' which in spite of later misunderstandings has the merit of making clear those relations of nature and art which undoubtedly exist in poetry ; while, following Plato, he also emphasises the supreme importance of organic unity in all artistic work. In his treatment of tragedy he introduces us systematically to the logic of art, to the technique of dramatic structure, the theory of 'probability' and the rest ; and there is this further to be added, that while his doctrine of 'katharsis' is something more than an ingenious piece of special pleading, his remarks on *hamartia* and *peripeteia* bring to light some of the most distinctive features of tragedy in its truest form. Elsewhere he calls attention to the place of the marvellous in poetry as affording a legitimate aesthetic delight, to the need for a certain distinction of language in poetic diction ; and in numerous other places does he open up new trains of thought by means of casual hints which it was left for later ages to develop and complete. That his theorising lent itself at times to later misconstruction is also, of course, true ; and the uncertain position he takes up with regard to metre is an illustration of this. There is also the doctrine of the 'kinds' for which he was incidentally responsible. To him it was probably nothing more than a convenient classification of the practice of

poets, whereas to later ages it came to denote a system of fixed 'types', with definite qualities and hard-and-fast rules, a theory which lay at the root of much of the later heresy. Then, too, it is significant that, although much of his work concerned with formal questions, his definition of poetry was couched in terms of subject-matter, not form ; and so for ages to come the essence of poetry was held to reside in the ideas conveyed, that is, in the *inventio*, an idea that was seemingly confirmed by the prevailing study of rhetoric. Nor were his methods altogether free from later misinterpretation. His *Poetics* had been written in a coldly logical manner ; and this did much to encourage the false idea that the emotional effects of poetry could be normally attained by following rules of composition, by orderly arrangement, sound structure and the rest, a conception which led on naturally to the later worship of the rules.

"Yet, when all is said, the *Poetics* is perhaps the most living of Aristotleian works. Written in the severest of styles, devoid of all literary grace, it forms a treasury of ideas of lasting value the full significance of which it has taken centuries to understand. In it we see Aristotle as the first of the systematic theorists, an early exponent of the historical and psychological methods ; and incidentally a pioneer in the business of sane literary judgment ; so that alike in the theory and the practice of criticism the work stands at the beginning of things, developing and extending the findings of Plato. Of late the small treatise has been subjected to some amount of depreciation, a reaction doubtless from the extravagant praise of former ages. Yet in the history of criticism its importance is unquestionable and fundamental. It is

neither an infallible guide nor yet an antiquated text-book, but for breadth of outlook and sanity of judgment, for sheer penetrating power into the mysteries of art, the work is unrivalled ; and modern theorising has still to reckon with the contents of its 'discreet, unromantic' pages."

6. Longinus.

After Plato and Aristotle, the greatest Greek critic is Longinus. But before he appeared on the scene, there came some Latin critics, like Horace and Quintilian, who propounded their classical theories abour literature. Referring to this Scott-James has observed in his book, *The Making of Literature* : "In the centuries of ancient Greek decadence there is little than can be called criticism, and still less that belongs to the theory of criticism. There are flashes in Dionysius of Halicarnassus, a pregnant allusion to "Imagination" in Philostratus (which has been regarded as the earliest use of the term in the modern sense), and brilliant good sense in passages of Lucian. And finally, like some unexpected, unexplained phenomenon in the sky, there is Longinus, belonging to no age, to no school, to no tradition, uttering his amazing wisdom from the wilderness.

"But before him there were the Latin writers. To the student of criticism they are disappointing. Most of them labour under precisely the same disadvantages as the neoclassical writers of the seventeenth century—they were overawed by their sense of the superiority of the Greeks, and by centuries of authoritative pedantry. Cicero's influence in this matter must have been wholly bad. His taste in literature, correct to a fault, is that of the first

class scholar who takes to politics, and decorates his learned leisure with the arts. He was intellectually solid as well as agile. He was fastidious. He was always conventional. He played for safety in matters of taste, as in politics. Thus in the elegant Latin prose of the *De Oratore* he gives little more than a transcript of the views of Aristotle and the rhetoricians.

"With Horace it is different. He is by nature a conservative. His essential preference, like that of all born classicists, is for the thing that has stood the test—the branded wine that is mellowed, choice companionship, the poetry that has been with us in youth and in solitude. What, therefore, can he do but praise the models and the methods of greatest Greece? Follow the Greeks, he says, as so many were to say after him: 'Let the Greek models be never out of your hands.' Keep to the metres that have been established as proper to each form of poetry. Observe proportion and order. Adhere to the type. Be consistent. Of good writing the *fons et origo* is right thinking. And he gives us the maxim that was to be a proverb of criticism throughout the ages—the aim of poetry is 'to instruct, or to delight,' or both. A little here from Aristophanes and Plato, a little from Aristotle.

'To instruct and to delight.' We shall not forget the maxim. For many whose joy is in literature—and perhaps in vellum bindings, in rare editions, and in old Falernian—that is enough. We shall ask no more, it may be, from the delectable verses of Horace himself. They will serve to pass away the hours without weariness, and with the most exquisite, delicate sense of well-being and refinement. But Virgil? He too may instruct and delight, but to account for our feeling for him we must go

further—we must go far as Longinus.

"Of all the Roman critics Quintilian is the most competent, the most urbane, and the most catholic. He, too, concentrates his attention on form, and has little to say about matter. He tells us what the critic should look for in a prose composition. He will consider its arrangement, its clearness, its conciseness, its design, and the extent to which artifice is concealed—(*Always ars est celare artem*). He will study also its persuasiveness—the force of the argument, the excitement aroused, the humour—the devices, in fact, which are used in appealing to heart and head. (The model considered seems always to be an advocate appealing to the judges). He will give special care, of course, to style and diction, where the variation of rhythm and the study of the sound of words—to which the Latin ear is so attentive—will count for much.

"There are three points I would be disposed to note in this all too brief consideration of an important writer :

"(1) He standardized the vocabulary of formal criticism. He sharpened the instruments with which the student of composition should be equipped.

(2) He insisted that the writing of prose is an art. There were those in his time, as in ours, who urged that good writing should be natural and unstudied—that it should be what Wordsworth called 'spontaneous utterance'. Quintilian pointed out that that is best, even in nature, which is done in the best way possible—even a river flows with most force when it is unimpeded by superfluous rocks. Nothing will ever be at its best except when the best is brought out of it by art. Vigour is not impaired by beauty. Beauty is the companion of art. Indeed when

the excellence of style is lost by the alteration of words, it will often be found that the qualities for which a work was admired have disappeared. But there he leaves the argument. He does not discuss, except indirectly, the essential question of the relation of language to thought—language as *expression*.

"(3) Quintilian had an advantage of which he availed himself. The result is an interesting example of comparative criticism. He was far enough away from the golden age of Latin literature to see it in perspective and he saw it as a literature different in kind from that which the Greeks had produced. Aristotle had before him none but the Greek models. The Romans in the time of Virgil and Horace were still spell-bound by the tradition of Greek pre-eminence, and hoped for no more from Latin literature than that it should imitate and repeat the successes of the ancients, in the ancient manner. Quintilian recognized that, in fact, they had done something more. Working in a different language, they had achieved excellence of a different kind. He compares Greek literature with Roman, the Greek language with the Latin. He recognized that the Latin was a less gracious, a less subtle instrument than the Greek. Therefore, to attain results as great, it must be used differently; it must make up by strength, variety, and metaphor what it lacked in lightness and grace."

Longinus' treatise *On the Sublime* is of fundamental importance in the history of criticism as here he presents himself as the first romantic critic. Explaining the principles laid down by Longinus, and their importance, Daiches has observed in his book, *Critical Approaches to Literature* : "*On the Sublime* shows a radically different app-

roach from either Plato's or Aristotle's. The author, whose identity is uncertain but who may have been Cassius Longinus of Palmyra, who lived in the third century A.D., or may have been somebody else who lived perhaps two centuries earlier, is generally referred to as Longinus and his work has long been known simply as *Longinus On the Sublime.* His importance lies in the fact that he asked quite different questions about literature from those asked by Plato or Aristotle. Taking for granted Aristotle's demonstration that poetry yielded a peculiar pleasure of its own, Longinus turned his attention to its pleasurable effect on the reader or audience and produced the first 'effective' theory of literature. (It is true that classical theories of rhetoric, the art of persuasion, were 'affective' in that they concerned the ways in which words could be made to 'move' listeners or readers but this moving was merely one of several means of achieving persuasion, not, as with Longinus, an instantaneous effect and one valuable in itself.) The value of a work of literature can be assessed, according to Longinus, by introspection on the part of the reader or hearer; if he is carried away, transported, moved to ecstasy by the grandeur and passion of the work, then the work is good. Whether it is a good thing to be carried away and moved to ecstasy, Longinus does not explicitly discuss; but he does not simply assume that because the sensation is enjoyable it is, therefore, valuable, for by insisting that it is nobility and grandeur which are the sources of this enjoyment he links the pleasures of literature to the highest human faculties. The Greek word which it has become traditional to translate as *sublime* in English means literally *height* or *elevation*, and Longinus refers to those

qualities in a work of literature which instantaneously creates in the reader a sense of being carried to new heights of passionate experience; sublimity is the greatest of all the literary virtues, the one which makes a work, whatever its minor defects, truly impressive. The ultimate function of literature, and its ultimate justification, is to be sublime and to have on its readers the effect of ecstasy or transport that sublimity has.

"Longinus, for all his insistence on the importance of the reader's response, is not a mere impressionist, who judges literature in purely autobiographical terms. He insists that it takes much experience of literature to respond to it properly—'judgment of literature is the final fruit of ripe experience'—and he is concerned to distinguish those elements of style and structure which contribute to the effect of sublimity. His treatise—or what exists of it : only portions of it survive—is a careful inquiry into the elements which produce sublimity illustrated by much quotation, in which successful and unsuccessful attempts are compared and discussed ; and it really, therefore, properly belongs to the second section of this book, where we discuss not the philosophical inquiry into the nature and value of literature but the various kinds of practical inquiry into the relative virtues of this and that particular work. We take it up here, however, because in spite of the fact, that Longinus' inquiry into what constitutes sublimity in literature is essentially practical criticism, his whole method assumes an answer to the philosophical inquiry wholly different from any other given in the ancient world and not easily paralleled in later times. True, Longinus was known and admired in the Renaissance and the eighteenth century ;

but, far all that, and for all the influence he had in the eighteenth century, the implications concerning the nature and function of literature which his work contains were not realized or accepted. (The eighteenth century critics tended to interpret Longinus rhetorically and to see him as the great investigator into the emotional effects of particular uses of language rather than as a critic who saw the quality of sublimity as at once the mark of the truly great writer and the true source of the reader's pleasure.) Longinus' interest for us in our endeavour to classify some of the more important answers which critics have given to the question concerning the nature and value of literature is that he answers this question by identifying those qualities in an author (impressive thought and passion), that quality in the work (suiblimty), that effect on the reader (excitement, transport, ecstasy) which indicate greatness in literature. The true nature of literature is defined by a discussion of the criteria of great literature (the essence of a thing being determined by its highest manifestation) and the definition takes in moral and intellectual qualities of authors and reactions of readers as well as the make up of the work. Throughout the discussion the argument moves freely between the author, the work, and the reader.

"For Longinus, great literature is that which excites and arouses the reader not only once but repeatedly; if it produces this impression after repeated readings, and among men 'of different pursuits, lives, ambitions, ages and languages,' then its greatness is beyond question. To produce this effect on his readers the author must possess certain qualities as a man as well as certain skills as a writer. As a man he must have impressiveness of

thought and vehemence of emotion. As a writer, he must possess three qualities which are 'partly the product of art' (the previous two being innate) ; these are the ability to handle 'figures' (both of speech and of thought), nobility of diction, and the ability to put the whole composition together so as to produce dignity and elevation. Longinus has much that is interesting to say under each of these heads—discussing, for example, with many illustrations, imagery, metaphor, and what modern critics call *empathy*, the author's ability to feel himself into the midst of the situation he is describing. But he comes back continually to his main point : if the work is to be considered great, its effect on the reader must be to move him to passionate excitement. 'I would confidently affirm that nothing makes so much for grandeur as true emotion in the right place, for it inspires the words, as it were, with a wild gust of mad enthusiasm and fill them with divine frenzy'. The purpose of literature is to be moving, exciting, elevating, transporting, and critic's duty is to see how this is achieved by showing which elements best conduce to this result. Neither the Plato of the *Ion* nor the Plato of the *Republic* would have seen any force or relevance in Longinus' arguments ; they would have been, to Plato, all beside the point. Aristotle, though he would have had some sympathy with Longinus' analysis of individual passages in order to demonstrate how certain means produce certain effects (he would have treated them as minor questions of rhetoric), would on the whole have been puzzled by Longinus' premises and have thought that he was asking and answering the wrong questions."

"Giving an estimate of Longinus as a critic, Atkins has observed in his book, *Literary Criticism in Antiquity*, Vol.

II: "It, therefore, becomes clear that in 'Longinus' we have a great original critic, one who, propounding the truths of art as he sees them, succeeds in opening men's eyes to new aspects of literature. Nor is his manner any less original than his matter; for in his subjectivity, his enthusiasm, his lively and personal style, may be noted features which for the most part were wanting in earlier critical work. It is not too much to say, paradoxical as it may sound, that from no other of the ancient critical writings does the author emerge more clearly than from this work, the authorship of which is unknown. And this is partly the result of the sincerity and ardour of the thought, the generosity of the judgments, and the modesty with which the author puts forward his opinions. Of his acute sensibilities and his catholic taste something has already been said; but along with these there went also a certain directness of vision and an instinct for seeking first principles in his various discussions. That he is not altogether exempt from laboured refinements may be conceded; while in one place he seems to give countenance to the allegorical interpretation of Homer. Nevertheless in the work as a whole there is surprisingly little dead matter; on the other hand much that is vital, expressed in memorable fashion. Nor in his style an unworthy medium of his thought lacking though it may be in attic purity of speech. Reminiscent in some ways of Plato's manner, and rich with metaphors, compounds, and poetical expressions, it has at the same time a peculiar intensity of its own; and this was due partly to striking epigrams and picturesque similes, partly also to long periods brought in each instanc› to a triumphant close.

"As for the place he occupies in the critical develop-

ment this much at least is obvious, that in an age of confused standards he advocated in unique fashion a return to the ideals of Greek classical art. The doctrine as such was no new thing: it had been put forward by Cicero, Horace, Dionysius and others. But whereas their teaching had been partial, with technical and formal tendencies, a classicism in short which was to become still narrower in later ages, 'Longinus' alone succeeded in recapturing the spirit of the ancient art, and in laying bare by his analysis the unchanging principles of that art. This, when all said, must be regarded as his great achievement, that with a clearer perception of the influence of changing conditions than his predecessors had possessed, he still maintained the permanent validity of those principles where literature was concerned. It is therefore as an exponent of the genuine classical spirit that he is perhaps best described; and not, as he has called, the first romantic critic. Throughout his discussion, it has been noted, he is concerned mainly with ancient Greek models, while the theory is solely based on the conception of art as the product of principles deduced from the practice of the past. Nor is this reverence for tradition the only classical element in his constitution. He is classical also in the balance he maintains between genius and unimpassioned hard work, in his sense of the need for fitnes, selection, and a fine adjustment of means to ends; while in addition, a 'romantic' critic would not have been blind to the 'romance' in the *Odyssey*. So that it is as one of the last of classical critics that he figures primarily in ancient critical history. But while this is true, it is true also that he anticipates much that is modern in critical work. And this is shown by his concern with the essenc

rather than with the form of literature, his understanding of the part played by the imagination and the feelings in creative work, his efforts at literary interpretation and appreciation, his widening outlook and the variety of his judicial methods ; features which were to reappear only after the lapse of centuries. The fact is that in him were combined faculties that were characteristic of the greatest of his predecessors. Like Aristotle, for instance, he based his theories on existing Greek literature ; he likewise aimed at a rational explanation of literary phenomena ; and his methods of theorising are analytic. inductive, psychological, and historical. On the other hand, he is spiritually the antithesis of Aristotle ; for nothing could be farther removed from the cold intellectualism of Aristotle than the impassioned and suggestive teaching of 'Longinus'. And in this respect he is reminiscent of Plato, for whom he betrays everywhere the warmest admiration. Platonic affinities, in short, are seen in his use of the imaginative reason as well as in his idealism, and enthusiasm ; and these are among the things that make the work what it is, one of the great masterpieces. Hence his claim to rank with the greatest of ancient critics, whose work he may be said to have supplmented to a marked degree. In one respect indeed he may be fairly regarded as unique : in the quality of his criticism both theoretical and applied. And for the rest he must be numbered among seminal minds of all time. Conspicuous for his suggestiveness and for the number of aesthetic truths he revealed or made familiar, he stands as a reminder of some of the essentials of literature, and as a lasting and stimulating force in the field of literary taste."

7. Dante.

After Longinu there came the dark ages in literary criticism. For a long time no important critic appeared, and no new ground was explored in the field of literary criticism until the flowering of the Renaissance. The only great figure who illumined this dark period was Dante, who may be considered the forerunner of the Renaissance. Referring to this Scott-James has observed in his book, *The Making of Literature* : "As if to prove that all generalizations about the Middle Ages are false, we have ever before us the figure of Dante. It is not enough to say that Dante is a forerunner of the Renaissance, and that in him we have an early result of a return to the study of the ancients. For what is finest and most spiritual in thirteenth-century catholicism has left its mark on the *Divine Comedy* and entered into its soul. We recognize in its author an example of what that strangely mingled age might produce under favourable circumstances, an age which seems to present to us so many contrasts of faith, chivalry, splendour, violence, squalor, meekness—in which the flesh and the spirit, the devil and the saint, are thrown, in grotesque juxtaposition, into relief."

Dante's main contribution to literary criticism was his consideration of the question of language and its relation to literature. Referring to this Scott-James has observed : "Dante realized that this was no secondary question—this question of language. It was one to be decided at the outset by every poet, be he Italian or French, or English. 'What language will the poet use ?' he asks in the *De Vulgari Eloquio*. For the learned there was always Latin, a flawless instrument of precision for those who could master it perfectly. But even the few

who have become fully familiar with it have only done so by schooling and discipline and long study. How much more freely and naturally men write when they use the vulgar tongue which they learned from their nurses ! This is the language they used first, the language in which they freely and naturally express their emotions ; and it is used by every kind of man. Yet in Italy, as in England and in France, there were many dialects, many vocabularies varying with each locality. How to use the language of nature and get escape provinciality and meanness ?

"Dante, then, was confronted with the problem of making, or rather choosing, a language. He decided that it must be that of the vulgar tongue. the vernacular—but with a difference. It must be the language of culture, the language which would be common to men of letters who meet together from all parts ; it must be suited for the headquarters of society, art and letters—an Illustrious Vernacular. This instrument of precision which the poet needed should be the mother-tongue, but that tongue purged from its provincialism, employing words and turns of speech which are not peculiar to any one province or small State, but are common to all.

"Dante, as a poet and critic, is intent upon shaping and defining nothing less than an ideal language fit to express the best thoughts of the greatest poet. He has started from the fact that this must be the native tongue, the language in which he freely and instinctively expresses thought and emotion. Yet he is as far as possible from the view of Wordsworth that poetry is just 'the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings,' or that the poet will be content with 'a selection of language really

used by men.' Poetry is not, for Dante, 'spontaneous utterance'. He holds the opposite view. 'Poetry and the language proper for it are an elaborate and painful toil. When he advises the use of the vernacular, he did not mean 'the language of common life'; on the contrary, he says, 'Avoid rustic language'. And he proceeds to examine the kind of words he would admit into his vocabulary.

"But not till he has first examined a question prior to this, upon which all else depends. Language for Dante is powerful and a subtle instrument, without which, fitly used, there can be no worthy literature; but he does not exalt the instrument above that for which it is used. It is a means of expression, but that which has to be expressed comes first in order of thought and importance. Speech, he says, is for a poet what a horse is to a soldier. The best soldiers should have the best horses, and in like manner the best speech is that which is suited to the best thoughts, and can only be used by those 'in whom wit and knowledge are found.'

"In the same spirit, then, in which Aristotle declared that the plot is the first thing, Dante puts first the claims of the poet's *subject*. It is no use asking for a grand style until you have recognized that it can only be employed in the service of a grand theme, as conceived by a man of great intellectual stature. Somewhat arbitrarily perhaps, he decides that the best subjects are *salus*. *Venus*, *virtus*—but those three Latin words cover no small field—*Safety* (of the state), *love*, *excellence* (moral, philosophic, and religious). The first may be compared with the French word *securite*, and includes all that we may indicate by prowess in war, chivalry, patriot-

ism. Perhaps we should not be far wrong if we said that these three words imply actions arising out of love of country, love of woman, and love of God.

"Subject—theme—thought—that is the first element in the higher kind of literature which he calls 'tragic'; to characterize it he uses that excellent Latin word, a word most expressive as some have thought, of the essential quality which appears again and again in the typical achievements of the ancient Romans—the word *gravitas*. *Gravitas sententiae,* weight of meaning or thought—that is the first condition of a poem that is to be written in the tragic style. And to this will necessarily be added certain qualities of verse, of style, of vocabulary (*superbia carminum, constructionis elatio, excellentia vacabulorum*).

"His consideration of the best metrical form is relevant only to composition in a Romance language, more especially the Italian. The best style is that which adds to the lesser excellence—those of correct composition and rhetorical embellishment—that quality of loftiness or elevation which distinguishes the illustrious masters of style. This, in turn, depends in no small measure upon excellence of vocabulary.

"Thus Dante is brought back to the subject he had embarked upon—the language suited to the best writers—the Illustrious Vernacular. For the Italian, as for the Latin writers in prose and verse, alike, the actual sound of words and their pitch are of inestimable importance in a beautiful line or in a sonorous rhythm. For Dante each individual word is spoken of almost as if it had a separate personality of its own, certainly a distinctive character which it may possess independently of its context. He sets about his task of collecting words as if

he were choosing a company of trusty comrades, and there is not one of them which must not play its part worthily in the texture of the poom.

"He requires then, that the vocabulary of his Illustrious Vernacular should be composed of grand words only (*grandiose*) words that lend themselves to what Matthew Arnold, borrowing the adjective, calls 'the grand manner'. He does not hesitate to excommunicate whole classes of Italian words, which are described as childish, effeminate, rough, slippery (or slimy), and rumpled and leaves only two classes of 'urban' words which are fit for his Illustrious Vernacular, those that are 'combed' (*pexa*) and those that are 'shaggy' (*hirsuta*). The first are 'trisyllabic, or very nearly so without aspirates, without acute or circumflex accent or double Z's and Z's without the collocation of two liquids, or the position of a liquid immediately after a mute.' These are words 'which leave the speaker's lips as it were, with a certain sweetness, as *a more, donna, disio, virtute, donare, letizia, salute, securitate, defesa*'. And to these may be added the 'shaggy' words, the necessary monosyllables which cannot be dispensed with, or 'ornamental' words which when mixed with 'combed' words make a beautifully harmonious conjunction."

8. Sidney

The greatest critic of the Renaissance was an Englishman, Sir Philip Sidney, who, in his *Apology for Poetry*, broke new grounds, and made some solid contribution to literary criticism. Referring to the principles enunciated in *Apology for Poetry*, Wimsatt and Brooks have observed in their book, *A Short History of Literary Criticism*:

"High points of interest in the essay include a preliminary double definition of poetry, from Aristotle and from Horace, a now famous statement that the poet's tale 'holds' children from play and old men from the chimney corner, an adaptation of Aristotlean doctrine making poetry a union of philosophy and history and giving it the highest literary palm after the *Scriptures*, an invocation of Plato as a witness for poetry (following so reputable an authority as Scaliger, Sidney overrates the Socratic concessions to poetic frenzy in the *Ion*), and a section where Sidney applies Scaligerian and Horatian norms to English poetry. He protests against the slack unity of academic tragedies (excepting Gorboduc) and the clatter of wooden swords in battle endings. He mentions Spenser's *Shepheardes Calender* with respect, admits the stirring of his heart at the old ballad of Chevy Chase, and looks back with wistful respect and wonder at Chaucer—'that he in that misty time could see so clearly.' We may look on these later details of Sidney's Defence as constituting and early landmark in the progress of English literary self-consciousness and literary history.

"To look a little more closely at the theoretic content of Sidney's moral defence of poetry ; one should note in the first place that the second of Sidney's preliminary definitions is such as to make the moral *content* of poetry (that is, vices and virtues correctly evaluated) as part of its essential requirement as indeed his first definition names the purpose of poetry explicitly as teaching.

> 'Poesy, therefore, is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in his word *mimesis*, that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth ; to speak metaphorically a speaking picture, with this end,—to teach and delight.

> ......It is not riming and versing that maketh a poet...but it is that feigning notable images of virtues, vices, or what else, with that delightful teaching, which must be the right describing note to know a poet by.'

"Yet in the second place, at a much later point in the essay, when he is facing Platonic objections and is hence forced into reasoning about the moral requirement and how to reconcile it with the stark fact that much fine poetry is immoral, Sidney says something different. The phenomenon of immoral poetry ('amorous conceits', 'lust', 'vanity', 'scurrility' in poetry) means 'not...that poetry abuseth man's wit but that man's wit abuseth poetry.' He could have said (though to say so would have contradicted easily observable facts and he did not say it) that immoral poetry was, by this earlier definition, no poetry at all. He preferred to raise the question how poetry which is defined as something moral can be in fact either moral or immoral. His answer in terms of the ideal conceived as what is most real should not be dismissed too lightly, though it perhaps gives mere logic some difficulty.

> 'Nay, truly, though I yield that poesy may not only be abused, but that by being abused by the reason of his sweet charming force it can do more hurt than any other army of words, yet shall it be so far from concluding that the abuse should give reproach to the abused that contrariwise it is a good reason, that whatsoever, being abused, doth most harm being rightly used and upon the right use each thing receiveth his title—doth most good.'

"Many volumes of subsequent debate have perhaps not adjusted this delicate conflict of values any more satisfactorily. One might summarize the problem by saying that Sidney like most of those who have maintained that

poetry is (and ought to be) moral has not been able to resolve an ambiguity of the word *ought* as used in the formula. Is this a poetic 'ought,' or is in fact only a moral 'ought' ? In the second sense 'ought,' to be moral is a tautology—since moral is what all our works ought to be. Is the thesis about the morality of poetry a truism in the realm of morals or does it lie actually in the realm of poetics ? Does it actually relate to the poet's craft ?

"But it is when we back off from the too explicit question about morals posed by the uncomfortable Gosson and allow ourselves to hear Sidney echoing some of those safer, because more generalized Renaissance doctrines of ideality to which we have lately referred, that we have the Sidney who is dearest to the English literary tradition. In late antiquity, we remember there had appeared the Plotinian doctrine of the poet's intimate access to the transcendent forms, and the example of the divinely conceived Phidian Zeus, which Plotinus shared with *Vita Apollonii* of Philostratus. These approaches to a theory of creative imagination have their notable counterparts in Renaissance English. There is for example that passage in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* where the 'Poet's eyes in a fine frenzy rolling, Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven ...The poet's pen...gives to airy nothing A local habitation and a name.' There is that in Bacon's *Proficience and Advancement of Learning* where 'reason doth buckle and bowe the mind unto the Nature of things', poetry 'doth raise and erect the Mind by submitting the shewes of things to the desires of the mind. Therefore it was ever thought to have some participation of divi-

nesse'. And Sidney himself contributes two of the brightest of our florilegium of such sententiae ; the brief refutation of a stock charge,...the poet...nothing affirmeth, and, therefore, never lieth, and a metaphor of the zodiac's range and fire which, framed in its needed context, we present as the tailpiece and conclusion of our procession from antiquity to the earliest flourishing of English critical self-consciousness.

"There is no art delivered unto mankind that hath not the works of nature for his principal object...only the poet, disdaining to be tied to any such subjection, lifted up with the vigour of his own invention, doth grow, in effect, into another nature, in making things either better than nature bringeth forth or, quite anew, forms such as never were in nature, as the heroes, demi-gods, cyclops, chimeras, furies, and such like ; so as he goeth hand in hand with nature, nor enclosed within the narrow warrant of her gifts, but freely ranging within the zodiac of his own wit. Nature never set forth the earth in so rich tapestry as divers poets have done ; neither with pleasant rivers, fruitful trees, sweet smelling flowers, not whatsoever else may make the too-much loved earth more lovely ; her world is brazen and poets only deliver a golden."

In his *Apology for Poetry*, Sidney gave a new notion of 'imitation'. Referring to this Daiches has observed in his book, *Approaches to Literature* : Sidney "is not really concerned to prove that poetry imitates anything —indeed, its glory is that it is the only one of the arts that does not imitate, but creates. He almost proceeds to develop a theory of 'ideal imitation,' the notion that the poet imitates not the mere appearance of actuality

but the hidden reality behind them, but stops short of this to maintain the more naive theory that the poet creates better world than the one we actually live in. He does not, however, rest content with a mere escapist position. The function of imaginative literature is not to provide us with an escape world in which our imaginations can seek consolation for the difficulties and imperfections of real life. It is true that this view of literature as simple escape is often held, and that the great majority of ordinary readers of popular magazine stories today have some such view of the function of fiction, but for Sidney this would be a far from adequate defence of poetry, and would certainly not meet the puritan charge. No ; for Sidney the ideal world of the poet is of value because it is both a better world than the real one and it is presented in such a way that the reader is stimulated to try and imitate it in his own practice. Thus the Aristotelean notion of imitation is transferred from the poet to the reader. The poet does not imitate but creates ; *it is the reader who imitates what the poet creates.*

"This is most interesting development of the argument. Taking from the Roman poet Horace the view that the poet delights and teaches, Sidney goes on to show that the poets 'indeede doo meerely make imitate and imitate both to delight and teach, and delight to moue men to take that goodness in hande, which without delight they would flye as from a stranger ; and teach, to make them know that goodness whereunto they are moued which being the noblest scope to which euer any learning was directed, yet want there not idle tongues to barke at them.' He then proceeds to point out that verse 'is but an ornament and no cause to

Poetry' and 'it is not riming and versing that maketh a poet, no more than a long gowne maketh an Aduocate ...but it is that fayning notable images of vertues, vices, or what els, with that delightful teaching which must be the right describing note to know a poet by: although indeed the Senate of poets hath chosen verse as their fittest rayment, meaning, as in matter they passed all in all, so in manner to goe beyond them; not speaking (table talke fashion or like men in a dreame) words as they chanceably fall from the mouth but peyzing (weighing) each sillable of each word by just proportion according to the dignities of the subject.'

"The poet, then teaches by presenting an ideal world for the imitation of the reader. But if the poet's world is, as he had earlier maintained, a perfect world, where all rivers are pleasant, all trees fruitful, all lovers faithful and all friends constant, how can the poet's activity be described as 'fayning notable images of vertues, *vices or what else*'? should not they all be virtues? The answer to this is that when Sidney asked earlier where such perfect lovers, friends, princes, and heroes as one finds in the works of the poets were to be found in real life he did not really mean that *all* characters in fiction were ideal; he meant that when they were good they acted in accordance with the full perfection of that kind of goodness, and when they were bad their badness was equally unmixed, obviously ugly, and inevitably leading to appropriate punishment. This perfection of the poet's world it emerges later in Sidney's argument does not consist in its being peopled with wholly virtuous characters, but in its heroes always being perfect in behaviour and successful in fortune and its villains always thorough-

ly and obviously villainous and doomed to a certain bad end. In the poet's world the righteous always prosper and the wicked are never left unpunished. It is from this conception that we get the term 'poetic justice'."

Referring to the importance of Sidney's *Apology for Poetry*, Atkins has observed in his book, *English Literary Criticism* (The Renascence) : 'Sidney's *Apology for Poetry*, a work which has rightly been valued as one of the outstanding performances in English criticism and one which inaugurated a new phase in critical history. It has been described as an epitome of Renascence theory ; but this description can be misleading if it is taken to mean nothing more than a summary reproduction of classical and Italian doctrine. What gives to the work its undoubted value is its originality, the skill with which Sidney has drawn on earlier teaching, selecting, adapting and fusing together ideas gathered from many sources, in order to set forth ultimately his own conception of poetry, independently arrived at. Thus apart from the Italians, he makes use of Plato and Aristotle, Horace and Plutarch but, like Horace, he subscribes to the authority of no one school of thought. His treatment throughout is of an eclectic kind ; his conclusions are the result of personal reflexion as well as wide reading ; and upon them is stamped the impress of lofty personality. At the same time it cannot be doubted that Platonic influence played a considerable, perhaps a predominante part in shaping his views, owing to some affinity of spirit. To him poetry was a natural human activity enabling men to sing of beauty and truth, and to satisfy their longings for a world transformed, thus nurturing in them what

was good and noble. Moreover, so far from being merely an instrument for moral teaching, it was a concrete and inspiring revelation of human ideals, and thus, in a sense, a criticism of life. This, then, with its element of permanent truth, was the substance of Sidney's message to an age perplexed and even hostile. With the traditional objections boldly faced, with claims put forward for a place for poetry in the intellectual and social life, and with attempts made at a serious treatment of the poetic art, that message constituted a vindication of poetry individual and unique in kind, which restored to poetry something of its ancient prestige and meaning and was calculated to bring enlightenment and reassurance to his own generation.

"Nor was the originality of the work confined solely to its subject matter ; in the manner of presentation, too, will be found freshness and vigour characteristic of Sidney alone. Writing for courtly circles and in a vein far removed from the fantastic and pedestrian styles of contemporary pamphlets and disputations, he achieved a form of expression unsurpassed even in an age of daring experiments in prose. Nowhere else do we find the same happy mingling of the ideal and the practical, the same blend of dignity and humour, of sincerity and irony of controlled enthusiasms and racy colloquialisms ; or again, that unstudied simplicity and grace which everywhere pervade the work. And over and above all this was the realistic presentment of his abstract theme in concrete terms. In antiquity the vivid representation of things by means of word pictures had been strongly commended ; but to the Elizabethans the device seems to have come naturally and inevitably in the absence of

abstract and philosophical terms. This accounts in a large measure for the appeal of Elizabethan prose ; and in Sidney's *Apology* it gives to the work much of its simple charm and ¦effectiveness. It is therefore as the first piece of literary criticism in English that is literature itself that the *Apology* figures in critical history ; and appearing as it did in the dawn of the great efflorescence, it forms a worthy prelude to what was to follow. Of its actual influence on contemporaries one can but conjecture ; though circulated in manuscript as it was among Sidney's friends up to the date of publication (1595) its effects can scarcely have been slight. On Ben Johson its influence is abundantly clear ; the same is also true in connexion with Shakespeare and other dramatists ; while Shelley later on was not alone in deriving inspiration from its pages when he wrote his *Defence of Poetry*. As a fitting legacy of one of England's noblest and gentlest souls the work will continue to charm modern readers with its idealism, its sanity, its humour, and its grace. And nothing is surely more characteristic of the spirit of its author than the delightful irony with which he takes leave of his readers in uttering his direful threat to all those "earth creeping minds' who, despite the claims he had made so eagerly and convincingly, still remained deaf to 'the planet-like music of poetry'."

9. Ben Jonson.

Ben Jonson, another great critic of the Renaissance in England, was unlike Sidney, classical in his outlook. In resisting the unruly romanticism of his time, he helped the reverse movement towards neo-classical pendantry.

It is not that he did not recognise the greatness of his age, but he was opposed to too much extravagance and lack of restraint in his contemporaries, who had flung all authority to the winds, and who considered genius as a justification for every fault.

Referring to the principles of criticism enunciated by Ben Jonson in his various works, Scott-James has observed in his book, *The Making of Literature* : "In a world in which he saw chaos Jonson endeavoured, in the light of ancient learning, to reimpose the classic order. One contemporary figure stood out for him above all others, that of a man stately, aloof, cold, uncannily wise, terrifically self-possessed—his Dominus Verulamius—Bacon the scholar, the statesman, the scientist, the logician, the grave essayist—'No man ever spoke more neatly, more pressly, more weightily, or suffered less emptiness, idleness in what he uttered. No member of his speech but consisted of his own graces.' This admiration for Bacon, a man whose intellectual integrity no Time-spirit could touch, an embodiment—in the sphere of letters, if not of politics—of strength exercised with restraint, is a clue to the spirit in which Jonson looks for the proper excellences of literature.

"Seeking principles of order, restraint, harmony he takes his stand upon the precepts and the examples of the Greeks. Reading him side by side with those stilted critics who were already making their voices heard on the continent, and were soon to turn the classics into text books and to manacle the poets with gyves forged out of a pedantic reading of Aristotle and Horace, we may feel that Jonson is perilously near to the neo-classicism of Boleau, Racine, and Le Bossu. But whilst

the latter reflected the too staid decorum of the age in which they lived, Jonson was preaching decorum in an atmosphere of riot. He stated, and, under provocation, overstated the values of ancient example, which the critics of the next generation, without any such excuse, exaggerated to the verge of parody. Jonson dwelt upon the Greek principle of 'nothing too much' when he was surrounded by writers who commonly seek to do more than enough. 'He pleaded for' election and a mean, for proportion, fitness, propriety, for 'a strict and succinct style' wherein 'you can take away nothing without loss'. With such maxims which had not in his time gained the currency of platitude, he countered the doctrine that mere profusion is genius, protesting against 'the scenical strutting and furious vociferation' of the *Tamerlanes* and *Tamer-chams* of his time. But he was not content to reassert the general principles which underlie the practice of the Greeks. Though he admitted that the laws of poetry were not invented by Aristotle, that none fulfilled them more perfectly than Sophocles who lived before Aristotle; that no Greekling 'durst ever give precepts to Demosthenes'; still, it was Aristotle who 'understood the casses of things'. 'What other men did by chance or custom he doth by reason; and not only found out the way not to err, but the short way we should take not to err'.

" 'The short way not to err'! 'Is not this the very jargon of the neo-classics, foreshadowing submission to a sovereignty which was soon to become an intolerable servitude? Jonson restates the doctrine of the *poetics*, only diverging from it to dot 'i's' which Aristotle never dotted, and to impose the unity of Time more emphati-

cally than did the master. The difference between epic and drama, the meaning of fable or plot, the 'wholeness' of an action, its dimensions—all of these are explained in language which is little more than a paraphrase of Aristotle.

'He accepts the classic order, not, as Winckelmann did in a later age, in a deeply critical spirit, seeking to discover in the forms of ancient art the profound spirit which they embodied; not probing the mind of those older poets to discover the nature of their feeling for the beautiful or the true which led them to preserve so austerely certain types of poetry, as in like manner it led the sculptors to limit their range of expression through the human face. But then, in the England of Jonson's time, classicism had neither been grossly exaggerated nor put upon its defence. His interest was not in probing the methods of the Greeks but the methods of the Elizabethans. Enough for him that the former had an authority which he could enlist without fear of challenge. His main concern, in a literary circle which seemed to know no standards, was to impose some unquestionable standard of excellence, even if it were a superficial one; to introduce discipline, where there was none; to set limits, where hyperbole was the besetting sin; to strengthen, by curbing; to make art a matter of conscience as well as impulse. Conscience, perhaps, is just what he means. He compares 'custom of speech, which is the consent of the learned' to 'custom of life, which is the consent of the good.' Thus he insists that there is a right or a wrong in art just as there is a right and a wrong in moral conduct.

"I do not mean that his discussion touches what we

call the problem of 'art and morality'. His is an argument by analogy—just as there are standards in morality so there are standards in art ; just as there are excellences of character, habit, conduct, so there are excellences proper to the poet. He dwells much on what we might call 'conduct' and 'conscience' in the practice of literature and asks what the poet 'is or should be by nature, by exercise, by imitation, by study.'

"Thus the first quality that he requires in a 'poet or maker' is 'a goodness of natural, witty, ingenium,' a 'perfection of nature'. Thus endowed he is 'able by nature and instinct to pour out the treasure of this mind'. Or if we should care to use the language of theology, it is as if he said that the poet is what he is by the grace of God ; he is born of Elect. The poetical rapture, the madness which inspires him, is not of his own power but of divine origin :

"(1) Natural endowment, then, is the first the essential thing ; but secondly, and thirdly, and fourthly Jonson makes demands which fall strictly within the sphere of 'conduct'.

"(2) This 'perfection of nature' is not enough by itself. We must add 'exercise of these parts, and frequent.' His opinion runs with that of Dante, not Wordsworth. Poetryis not 'spontaneous utterance. Rather, it is—in the words we have quoted from Dante—an 'elaborate and painful toil'. It is sa'd of the incomparable Virgil that he brought forth his verses like a bear, and after formed them with licking'. Just as the rhapsodic humanitarian rhetoric of the first decade of the twentieth century was distasteful to fastidious ears, so the vapid mouthings of some of his contemporaries to Jonson ; he

distrusted facility, shoddy ornament, thoughtless fluency. 'The best writers in their beginnings... imposed upon themselves care and industry ; they did nothing rashly ; they obtained first to write well, and then custom made it easy and a habit'. For Jonson there was no Royal Road to success in literature. 'Hard is the beautiful' was an old motto which his contemporaries had scorned : but it was his task to remind them of the ancient truth which one age forgets, another exaggerates out of all proportion. He demands that the literary artist should make his appeal to what Walter Pater was to call 'the scholar and the scholarly conscience'. And just as the latter said : 'The attention of the writer, in every minutest detail,' is 'a pledge that is worth the reader's while to be attentive to, that the writer is dealing scrupulously with his instruments,' so Jonson : 'things wrote with labour deserve to be so read'.

"(3) Pursing his examination of what I have called literary 'conduct' he finds the third requisite of his poet to be imitation, *imitation*—'to be able to convert the substance or riches of another poet to his own use.'

"(4) And the fourth—'exactness of study and multiplicity of reading, *lectio*, which maketh a full man.' Here again we see the student of Bacon.

"For Jonson, the calling of poet or man of letters implies a certain life which may be lived by the Elect alone and by them only upon the condition that they will enter upon it humble as novices, and submit themselves to an austere regimen, shaping themselves in accordance with the most excellent patterns, and finding therein the maxims which are to guide their conduct. For him it is a matter of the first importance to the

State to 'take care of the commonwealth of learning'. Schools are 'the seminars of State; and nothing is worthier for the study of a statesman than that part of the republic which we call the advancement of letters.'

"Yet, intent as he is upon discipline of the mind imposed both from within and without, he is far too good a poet to rest content with precepts, maxims and ready guides to literary conduct. He is not in love with the grammarians. 'To descend to those extreme anxieties and foolish cavils of grammarians, is able to break a wit in pieces, being a work of manifold misery and vainness, to be *elementarii sense.*' He does not want literature to become a department of schoolmastering. 'I am not of that opinion to conclude a poet's liberty within the narrow limits of laws which either the grammarians or philosophers prescribe.'

"The authority of Aristotle, as he writes these words, seems to be slipping away from under his feet; and all the more dangerously when he declares that 'to judge of poets is only the faculty of poets; and not of all poets, but the best'. He does not long let us forget his feeling that the excellence of literature springs from what is excellent in the personality of the author. With poet and painter alike 'Nature is more powerful in them than study'. Expression, as we should call it—self-expression—is the business of art from beginning to end; and he puts it in memorable words: 'In all speech, words and sense are as the body and the soul. The sense is as the life and soul of language, without which all words are dead.' 'Language most shows a man; Speak, that I may see thee.'

"And so the tempered wisdom of the poet, who is a

critic, demanding standards and restraints, must be read side by side with the passionate declarations of the critic, who is a poet, that the mad divinity of genius should be allowed wings to fly away with its rider, and 'utter somewhat above a mortal mouth. But for those who would claim this licence too easily, he is ready with the curb.

"Whether it is to be the curb, or the spur—how are we to know ? The answer, in the last resort, he has already given : 'To judge of poets is only the faculty of poets.' "

Giving an estimate of Ben Jonson as a critic Saintsbury has observed in his book, *A History of English Criticism* : "He does not, as must have been clearly seen, escape the 'classical' limitation. With some ignorance, doubtless, and doubtless also some contempts of the actual achievements of prose romance, and with that stubborn distrust of the modern tongues for miscellaneous prose purposes, which lasted till far into the seventeenth century, if it did not actually survive into the eighteenth, he still clings to the old mistakes about the identity of poetry and 'fiction', about the supremacy of oratory in prose. We hear nothing about the 'new versifying', though no doubt this would have been fully treated in his handling of Campion and Daniel; but had he had any approval for it, that approval must have been glanced at. His preference for the (stopped) couplet foreshadowed that which, with beneficial effects in some ways if by no means in all, was to influence the whole of English poetry, with the rarest exceptions, for nearly two centuries. The personal arrogance which, as in Wordsworth's case, affected all Ben's judgment of contemporaries, and which is almost too fully reflected in the Drummond Conversations, would probably

have made even his more deliberate judgments of these his judgments 'for publication'—inadequate. But it is fair to remember that Ben's theory (if not entirely his practice, especially in his exquisite lyrics and almost equally exquisite masques) constrained him to be severe to those contemporaries from Spenser, Shakespeare, and Donne downwards. The mission of the generation may be summed up in the three words, Liberty, Variety, Romance. Jonson's tastes were for Order, Uniformity Classicism.

"He is thus doubly interesting—interesting as putting both with sounder scholarship and more original with what men from Ascham to Puttenham, and later, had been trying to say before him, in the sense of adapting classical precepts to English ; and far more interesting as adumbrating, beforehand, the creed of Dryden, and Pope, and Samuel Johnson. Many of his individual judgments are as shrewd as they are one-sided ; they are always well, and sometimes admirably, expressed in a style which unites something of Elizabethan colour, and much of Jacobean weight, with not a little of Augustan simplicity and proportion. He does not head the line of English critics ; but he heads, and worthily, that of English critics who have been great both in criticism and in creation."

10. Dryden.

Dryden is called 'the Father of English criticism,' but he was the first critic in England who seriously preoccupied himself with the exposition of literary principles. Referring to the several advantages which enabled Dryden to become one of the greatest critics of England, Saintsbury has observed in his book, *A History of English*

Criticism : "Dryden started with every advantage, except those of a body of English criticism behind him and of a thorough knowledge of the whole of English literature. He was a poet nearly, if not quite, of the first class; and though his poetry, had a strong Romantic spirit in virtue of its perennial quality, it took the form and pressure of the time so thoroughly and so kindly that there was no internal conflict. Further he had what by no means all poets of the first class have had a strong, clear, commonsense judgement, and a very remarkable faculty of arguing the point. And, finally, if, he had few predecessors in English, and perhaps did not know much of those few except of Jonson, he was fairly, if not profited, and was to profit, by the best doctrine of the moderns.

"Moreover, from a certain not unimportant point of view he occupies a position which is only shared in the history of criticism by Dante and (in some estimations, though not in all) by Goethe—the position of the greatest man of letters in his own country, if not also in Europe, who is at the same time the greatest critic, and who is favoured by Fortune with a concentration of advantages as to time and circumstance. His critical excellence has indeed been never wholly overlooked, and except by the unjuster partisanship of the early Romantic movement in England, generally admitted with cheerfulness. The want, however, of that synoptic study of the subject, which it is the humble purpose of this book to facilitate, has too often prevented his full pre-eminence from being recognised. It may even be said that it is in criticism that Dryden best shows that original faculty which has often been denied him elsewhere. He borrows,

indeed, as freely as everywhere; he copies, with a half ludicrous deference, the stock opinions of the critics and the criticasters in vogue; he gives us pages on pages of their pedantic trivialities instead of his own shrewd and racy judgments. But, despite of all this, there is in him (and with good luck we may perhaps not fail to disengage it) a vein and style in 'judging of Authors' which goes straight back to Longinus, if it is not even independent of that great ancestry."

Dryden's main contribution to literary criticism was his further exploration of the principles of imitation and instruction in poetry. Referring to Dryden's views on these two topics, Daiches has observed in his book, *Critical Approaches to Literature*: "For Plato, the poet's world was second-hand imitation of reality, and, therefore, of no value; for Aristotle, the poet could, by the proper selection and organization of incident achieve a reality more profound than that represented by the casual surface of things which we meet in ordinary experience; for Sidney, the poet created a world morally better than the real world, for the moral edification and improvement of the reader. None of these critics suggests that the poet would do well to describe life merely as he finds it; for Plato, that is to imitate shadows: for Aristotle and Sidney, for different reasons it is simply not worth considering.

"In 1668, however, John Dryden published his Essay of *Dramatic Poesie*, a dialogue on the nature of poetic drama and the respective merits of classical, modern French Elizabethan and restoration plays, in which everybody agrees to define a play as 'A just and lively image of human nature, representing its passions and humours, and the changes of fortune to which it is subject, for the delight

and instruction of mankind'. Here, a hundred years after Sidney, a great English poet and critic is maintaining a principle utterly at variance with Sidney's views that the poet does not imitate the world as it is but invents a 'golden' world which is better. Do we have here another solution to the Platonic dilemma ?

"Let us first note just what it is that Dryden is saying. A play—it is agreed in the essay that this definition really applies to imaginative literature in general, whether in the form of drama or not—in the first place gives us an image of human nature. It shows people acting in such a way as to reveal what they are like. By the use of word image Dryden seems to be emphasizing the appearance, to be quite untroubled by Plato's notion that to do so is simply to imitate an imitation. Dryden makes no distinction, in fact, between an image of human nature and the truth about human nature ; the former, if it is 'just' gives the latter. The image is not only to be just ; it must also be lively. Sidney would have agreed with the necessity for liveliness. It is the basis of a criterion of style, and provides also a further criterion by which to judge plot whose first requirement is that it should be so organised as to give a just image of human nature. We have so far discussed four terms in the definition—'just', 'lively', 'image' and 'Human nature'. They are all important and each one contributes materially to the definition. A just account of human nature could be given by a psychologist, but it would be neither lively nor an image. Similarly, an image could be lively without being just, while a just image of human nature could be dull rather than lively. All four elements are necessary.

'The next phrase in Dryden's definition is more an elaboration of what he means by the first phrase than the addition of new requirements. You obtain a just and lively image of human nature by representing its 'passions and humours', ('humours' meaning states of mind or mental characteristics) ; and by representing the changes of fortune to which men are subject. It is only when we see a character's reactions to changes of fortune that we get a real view of his 'passions and humours'. If Hamlet's father had not been murdered by his uncle and his mother had not married that same uncle, Hamlet would never have been driven to exhibit the true image of his nature. It is the testing circumstance that illuminates character.

"Is Dryden, then, demanding that the writer of fiction, whether in plays or in other forms, indulge in what we today might call psychological realism ? Is it the duty of the writer to show us men involved in actions which exhibit their fundamental characteristics and so tell us something about human nature ? This would be a perfectly logical defence of poetry. The function of poetry would then be to inform the reader, in a lively and agreeable way, of what human nature is like. Literature would be a form of knowledge and it would bear the same relation to psychology as in Sidney it does to ethics. That is, while for Sidney the poet makes vivid and impressive, by his imaginary examples, the ideas of the moral philosopher, so for Dryden the poet makes vivid and impressive, by his imaginary examples, the knowledge of the psychologist.

"It might be maintained that the concluding phrase of Dryden's definition confirms this interpretation. It

is all to be done for the delight and instruction of mankind. The delight comes from the liveliness with which human nature is represented, and from the pleasure which comes from recognizing in fictional characters fundamental psychological truths ; while the instruction is not moral instruction, but instruction in the facts of human nature. The reader is instructed in psychology in fact. For why should we restrict the term 'instruction' to mean only moral instruction ? There can be any kind of instruction ; we send children to school to be instructed in arithmetic without any expectation that their sums will make them morally better. So could we not argue that Dryden is here pleading for a lively psychological realism, on the grounds that it gives pleasure and at the same time provides instruction in human psychology ? Would not that be an adequate solution of the Platonic dilemma, and an adequate defence of poetry ?

"It might well be that Dryden had some such notion in mind, although it must be admitted that the word 'instruction' in ambiguous and it generally carried the meaning of moral teaching in its use by critics of the period. We might note, however, that if Dryden meant that the function of drama was to delight and instruct by providing lively images of human nature in action under testing circumstances, the delight cannot have been supposed to come from *recognizing* what we already know about human nature if at the same time the play is to *instruct* us in human nature, which is to say, to tell us what we did not know before. 'Poetry', wrote Keats in one of his letters, 'should strike the reader as a wording of his own highest thoughts, and appear 'almost a Remembrance'. It is not simple recognition, but almost a remembrance. Dr.

Johnson arguing with William Pepys about Pope's definition of 'true wit' in poetry as 'what oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed,' objected strongly : 'That, sir, is a definition both false and foolish... "what oft was thought" is all the worse for being, often thought, because to be wit it ought to be newly thought.' It is clearly not enough to recognize what we already know. Nevertheless, one can recognize as 'just' what one did not know before. Keats' phrase 'almost a Remembrance' is suggestive because it indicates that there is middle ground that imaginative literature operates. If, therefore, a just and lively imitation of human nature 'delights and instructs' us the delight is not simply a matter of recognizing examples of what we already knew to be true, nor, on the other hand, are we 'instructed in what we had never known before : there is a kind of a recognition at work, but it is only apparently recognition—it is new knowledge operating through an impression of the familiar. The implication of Dryden's definition is that literature is a form of knowledge rather than a technique of persuasion. The knowledge pleases partly because of the delightful manner in which it is conveyed ; both the 'justness' and the 'liveliness' of the imitation of human nature contribute to the pleasure given by the work. Such a position, of course, ignores as meaningless the Platonic objection that what the poet imitates is itself an imitation of an imitation. The poet describes men as they are, that is, as they are found to be by observation and introspection and by reading the reports of the observations of others. To object that direct experience does not yield knowledge is, in the age of John Locke to play the wilful obscurantist.

"There are none the less difficulties in this point of view. What in fact is human nature ? we might ask. Men acting and suffering the reply would be. But what men, and what are they acting and suffering ? Human nature is illustrated by a man swearing when he hits his finger with hammer as well as by Hamlet going to pieces on learning the truth about his father's death and his uncle's guilt. What aspects of human nature in action are most fit for the poet to describe ? It will be seen at once that even to raise such a question is to pave the way for a hierarchy of more and less appropriate kinds of theme. Ambition represented by Alexander the Great is different from ambition as respresented by a draper's assistant working and scheming to have a store of his own. Cleopatra in love is different from Jenny being tousled by Jock behind the cowshed. Yet both illustrate human nature. Which theme is more appropriate to literature ? The modern critic would probably refuse to admit the validity of this question. Why should one be more appropriate than the other ? Whichever it may be, if it is done effectively, if it is just and lively, if in virtue of the way the story is put together and presented, it both pleases and instructs, providing that combination of recognition of what we think we knew and awareness of new insight which we have already discussed, then it is justified. But to concede that any aspect of human nature, illustrated by any kind of person is equally suitable for literature is to assume that we can get equal 'delight' from an account of Cleopatra's passion for Antony and from a picture of a farmhand's seduction of a milkmaid. In a democratic age like ours such an assumption may seem obvious, but it was far from obvious to earlier

ages, and neither Dryden nor Pope nor Dr. Johnson would have accepted as material for the literary imagination characters and situations which were not dignified by a symbolic external impressiveness. The 'passions' for men were indeed the subject of poetry but in the highest form of literature they were to be illustrated in people whose fate involved more than their own domestic fortunes. Both the Greeks and the Elizabethans also felt this (though the Elizabethans had their humbler kind of tragedy too) and part of the significance of Oedipus, as of Hamlet and Lear, is that, being rulers, their inner conflicts involve a large outer world, and at the same time, possessing 'great' natures (not necessarily naturalistically presented), they are more representative of the total human possibilities than. say, a farmhand.

"Poetry illuminates human nature, and pleases and instructs by so doing. By choosing for its chief characters persons sufficiently exalted in position for their fate to affect whole countries one can, without blurring the picture of human nature make the story more arresting and more far reaching in its implications. Thus if for Sidney heroic poetry is at the top of the hierarchy because it shows us directly the virtuous actions the reader is to be inspired to imitate, in those later critics who saw as the poet's task not the creation of an ideal world to be imitated but the projection of a lively image of the real world of men for the reader's pleasure and instruction, heroic poetry is likewise at the top because it deals with character whose fortunes are more interesting since they involve the fortunes of so many others. In each case a theory of the nature and value of poetry has led to a hierarchy of poetic 'kind's and though the theories differ

the hierarchy is the same."

Giving an estimate of Dryden as a critic Atkins has observed in his book, *English Literary Criticism, 17th and 18th Centuries*: "These then were Dryden's main pronouncements on literary theory and his judgments on literature; and it now remains to attempt some estimate of his many-sided critical achievement. That his critical powers, considerable from the first, matured in the due course, along with a widening of outlook, would seem evident from what has been said. Evident also are the facts that in output he had excelled all that had gone before; and that despite his lack of system, his inconsistencies and digressions, he has something substantial to offer his own and later ages. It is not without its significance, for instance, that in his literary theorizing he recalled not a few of the seminal and lasting principles generated in antiquity; that poetry, for example, was not confined to factual truth, that there was an 'imitation' that looked to the great masters for inspiration rather than for rules, that too much 'filing' killed the spirit, or again that grandeur of style was the glory of the epic' and that there existed yet another 'harmony of prose'. To these he added advice gleaned from his own experience. He decried bombast in the drama, for instance, conceits and 'false wit' in poetry, irrelevance and superfluity in prose; he called attention to the importance of dramatic characterization, whereas the ancient Chorus and the Unity of time he regarded as unnecessary features of English drama; and besides commending a subtler form of satire, he noted also the emotional values of literature in general, and the relations existing between poetry and one of the sister arts. Fur-

theromre, and not least, he drew attention to the higher function of criticism, that is the appreciation of positive literary excellences, and to the fact that time was the final test of literary values. He also illustrated his doctrine by revealing fresh 'beauties' in three of our greatest poets and by making an effective use of the psychological, comparative and historical methods in forming literary judgments. It all marked an advance in critical activities, and opened up new possibilities in theorizing and judgment alike.

"The advance thus made was due in some measure to contemporary. French influences ; to that of Corneille in his earlier period, to Rapin, Boileau's *Longinus* and Saint-Evremond in his later years ; though equally apparent, if less fruitful, was the use he made of the works of Segrais, Le Bossu, Dacier and others. Nowhere, does Dryden's critical acumen stand out more clearly than in the discriminating use he makes of the several influences, and in the certainty with which be adopts what was most vital in their theories, at the same time 'adding something of his own'. He makes, for instance, no formal attempt to expound the details of their doctrines ; and was less subservient than is sometimes supposed to the reigning neo-classical school. What on the other hand he assimilated were those influences which found a response in his own nature and temperament ; the free critical spirit fostered by Corneille, 'Longinus' and Saint Evremond for instance, Aristotle's sane doctrine presented anew by Rapin and Dacier, but, above all, the inspiring outlook of 'Longinus' revived by Boileau.

"Yet the secret of Dryden's greatness as a critic lay after all in himself, in that native sensibility which made

him keenly alive to artistic values, capable also of a dispassionate psychological analysis of those values. What he found to admire in Shakespeare or Chaucer was based on no formal rules, but on his own instinctive reactions submitted to the test of Nature or reason, a test, it should be added, which to him represented something more than mere commonsense or the prose understanding. The truth was that his judgment, at its best, both in the theorizing and appreciating, was of a supra-rational kind. It sprang from an imaginative sympathy which soared beyond anything that the pure unaided intellect could discern. Firmly based on his own impressions, his appreciations were something more than the result of acute analysis and sound reasoning, though these two played their part in confirming the faith that was in him. They were rather the result of a synthetic process which viewed the effects observed with a critical insight akin to the creative vision that detected in the multiplicity of those effects meaning and coherence, thus penetrating to the heart of things. In short, it is not too much to say that with Dryden in his psychological judgments the creative imagination was unconsciously at work a century or more before the process itself had been realized and defined.

"Nor was it merely this balance of feeling and reason that made Dryden so successful a critic. Much was also due to his manner of presentment, the charm, to the urbanity and liveliness with which he communicated his judgments, to the absence of pedantry, and to that clear and picturesque style which has given a host of arresting phrases and an unfading freshness to all he wrote. Then, too, there were his unfailing good sense, his

skill in argument, his independent judgment and his quiet dignity in replying to hostile and malevolent critics. All these commend him to modern readers ; as do also occasional suggestive thoughts such as, ' 'tis difficult to write justly on anything, but almost impossible in praise', or again 'anything...which a man speaks of himself...is still too much'. Yet what gives to his work its distinguishing flavour is the personal note that is heard throughout. A man's character, it has been said, may often be judged from his asides ; and the *obiter dicta* of a critic may give a clue to his profounder thought. Besides, an endearing human touch is supplied by Dryden's references to his own distressful circumstances, as towards the end the clouds gathered ominously around him. But when all is said what gives to his criticism its supreme value is that personal, irresistible quality which Gibbon later on ascribed to 'Longinus'. 'Longinus', he states 'not only lays bare his own spiritual experiences but he does so in such a way and with such enthusiasm that he succeeds in communicating his feelings to others ; and this compelling treatment, this infectious praise of great literature is characteristic of Dryden as well. Of this quality he himself was not unware in the abstract ; as when he saw in the best critics a certain magnetism in their judgments which atracted others to their sense'. His reputation as a critic, therefore, rests on sure and lasting foundations. In an age of transition and much confusion he set criticism on new and fruitful lines, pointing to others' standards and methods than those commended by the French neo-classical school. And his work remains today as readable and suggestive as ever, the legacy of one of the greatest of English critics."

11. Dr. Johnson

Dr. Johnson, the literary dictator of his age was also the greatest critic of his time and he made certain solid contributions to literary criticism. Referring to Johnson's background as a critic, Saintsbury has observed in his book, *A History of English Criticism* : "There is no reason to doubt that Johnson's critical opinions were formed quite early in life, and by that mixture of natural bent and influence of environment which, as a rule, forms all such opinions. There has been a tendency to regard, as the highest mental attitude that of considering everything as an open question, of being ready to reverse any opinion at a moment's notice. As a matter of fact, we have record of not many men who have proceeded in this way ; and it may be doubted whether among them is a single person of first rate genius or even talent. Generally speaking, the men whose genius or talent has 'stalk of carle hemp' in it find, in certain of the great primeval creeds of the world, political, ecclesiastical, literary, or other, something which suits their bent. The bent of their time may assist them in fastening on to this by attraction or repulsion—it really does not much matter which it is. In either case they will insensibly, from an early period, choose their line and shape their course accordingly. They will give a certain independence to it they will rarely be found merely 'swallowing formulas.' It is the other class which does this, with leave reserved to get rid of the said formulas by a mental emetic and swallow another set, which will very likely be subjected to the same fate. But the hero will be in the main *Qulias ab incepto.*

"Johnson was in most things a Tory by nature, his

Toryism being conditioned, first by that very strong bent towards a sort of transcendental scepticism which many great Tories have shown; secondly, by the usual peculiarities of social circumstance and mental constitution; and lastly, by the state of England in his time—a state to discuss which were here impertinent, but which, it may be humbly suggested will not be quite appreciated by accepting any, or all, of the more ordinary views of the eighteenth century.

"His view of literature was in part determined by these general influences, in part—perhaps chiefly—by special impinging currents. His mere birth time had not very much to do with it—Thomson, Dyer, Lady Winchelsea, who consciously or unconsciously worked against it, were older, in the lady's case much older, than he was, Gray and Shenstone, who consciously worked against it in different degrees were not much younger. The view was determined in his case, mainly no doubt by that natural bent which is quite inexplicable, but also by other things explicable enough. Johnson, partly though probably not wholly in consequence of his near sight, was entirely insensible to the beauties of nature; he made fun of 'prospects' he held that 'one blade of grass is like another' (which it most certainly is not, even in itself, let alone its surroundings): he liked human society in its most artificial form that provided by towns, clubs, parties. In the second place, his ear was only less deficient than his eye. That he did not care for music, in the scientific sense, is not of much importance; but it is quite clear that in poetry, only an extremely regular and almost mathematical beat of verse had any chance with him. Thirdly, he was widely read in the Latin Classics, less

widely in Greek, still more widely in the artificial revived Latin of the Renaissance and the seventeenth century. Fourthly, he was, for a man, so much given to reading for one who ranged from Macrobius in youth to *Parismus and Parismenus* in age and from *Travels in Abyssinia Prince Titi*—not very widely read either in mediaeval Latin or in the earlier divisions of the modern languages: indeed, of these last he probably knew little or nothing. Fifthly, the greatest poet in English immediately before his time, and the greatest poet in English during his youth and early manhood, had been exponents, the one mainly, the other wholly, of a certain limited theory of English verse. Sixthly, the critical school in which he had been brought up was strictly neo-classic. Seventhly, and to conclude, such rebels to convention as appeared in his time were chiefly men whom he regarded with unfriendly dislike, or with friendly contempt. Nor can it be said that any one of the contemporary partisans of 'the Gothick' was likely to convince a sturdy adversary. Walpole was a spiteful fribble with a thin vein of genius; Gray a sort of Mr. Facing-Both-Ways in literature, who had 'classical' mannerisms worse than any of Johnson's own, and whose dilettante shyness and scanty production invited ridicule. Both were Cambridge men (and Johnson did not love Cambridge men or they him) and both were Whigs. Percy and Warton were certainly not very strong as originals, and had foibles enough even as scholars. But whether these reasons go far enough, or do not so go, Johnson's general critical attitude never varies in the least. It was, as has been said, probably formed quite early; it no doubt appeared in those but dimly known contributions to periodical literature which defrayed so ill the expense of

his still more dimly known first twenty years in London. We have from him no single treatise, as in the case of Dante and Longinus, no pair of treatises, as in the case of Aristotle to go upon. But in the four great documents of the *Rambler*, *Rasselas*, the Shakespeare *Preface* and the *Lives*, we see it—in the two first rigid, peremptory, in the *Preface* curiously and representatively uncertain, in the last conditioned by differences which allow in somewhat freer play, and at some times making a few concessions, but at others more pugnacious and arbitrary than before."

The most important critical work of Johnson is *The Lives of Poets*. Referring to it Leslie Stephen has observed in his book, *Samuel Johnson* : "Here he has left much to be supplied and corrected by later scholars. His aim is simply to give a vigorous summary of the main facts of his heroes' lives, a pithy analysis of their character and a short criticism of their productions. The strong sense which is everywhere displayed, the massive style, which is yet easier and less cumbrous than in his earlier work and the uprightness and independence of the judgment, make the book agreeable even where we are most inclined to dissent from its conclusions.

"The criticism is that of a school which has died out under the great revolution of modern taste. The booksellers decided that English poetry began for their purposes with Cowley, and Johnson has, therefore, nothing to say about some of the greatest names in our literature, The loss is little to be regretted, since the biographical part of earlier memories must have been scanty, and the criticism inappreciative, Johnson, it may be said, like most of his contemporaries, considered poetry almost exclusively from the didactic and logical point of view. He

always inquires what is the moral of a work of art. If he does not precisely ask 'what it proves', he pays excessive attention to the logical solidity and coherence of its sentiments. He condemns not only insincerity and affectation of feeling, but all such poetic imagery as does not correspond to the actual prosaic belief of the writer. For the purely musical effects of poetry he has little or no feeling, and allows little deviation for the alternate long and short syllables neatly bound in Pope's couplets.

"To many readers this would imply that Johnson omits precisely the poetic element in poetry. I must be here content to say that in my opinion it implies rather a limitation than a fundamental error. Johnson errs in supposing that his logical tests are at all adequate ; but it is, I think, a still greater error to assume that poetry has no connection, because it has not this kind of connexion; with philosophy. His criticism has always a meaning, and in the case of works belonging to his own school a very sound meaning. When he is speaking of other poetry, we can only reply that his remarks may be true, but that they are not to the purpose.

"The remarks on the poetry of Dryden, Addison, and Pope are generally excellent, and always give the genuine expression of an independent judgment. Whoever thinks for himself, and says plainly what he thinks, has some merit as a critic. This, it is true, is about all that can be said for such criticism as that on Lycidas, which is delicious example of the wrong way of applying strong sense to inappropriate topics. Nothing can be truer in a sense, and nothing less relevant.

"In this poem', he says, 'there is no nature, for there is no truth ; no art, for there is nothing new. Its form

is that of a pastoral, easy, vulgar and, therefore, disgusting; whatever images it can supply are easily exhausted, and its inherent improbability always forces dissatisfaction on the mind. When Cowley tells of Hervey that they studied together, it is easy to suppose how much he must miss the companion of his labours and the partner of his discoveries; but what image of tenderness can be excited by these lines?—

> We drove afield and both together heard
> What time the gray fly winds her sultry horn.
> Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night.

We know that they never drove afield and had no flocks to batten; and though it be allowed that the representation may be allegorical, the true meaning is so uncertain and remote that it is never sought, because it cannot be known when it is found.

" 'Among the flocks and copses and flowers appear the heathen deities Jove and Phoebus. Neptune and Aeolus, with a long train of mythological imagery such as a college easily supplies. Nothing can less display knowledge or less exercise invention than to tell how a shepherd has lost his companion, and must now feed his flocks alone, without any judge of his skill in piping; how one god asks another god what has become of Lycidas, and neither god can tell. He who thus grieves will excite no sympathy; he who thus praises will confer no honour.'

"This is of course utterly outrageous, and yet much of it is undeniably true. To explain why, in spite of truth, Lycidas is a wonderful poem, would be to go pretty deeply into the theory of poetic expression. Most critics prefer simply to shriek, being at any rate safe from the errors of independent judgment.

"The general effect of the book, however, is not to be inferred from this or some other passages of antiquated and eccentric criticism. It is the shrewd sense everywhere cropping up which is really delightful. The keen remarks upon life and character, though, perhaps, rather too severe in tone, are worthy of vigorous mind, stored with much experience of many classes, and braced by constant exercise in the conversational arena. Passages everywhere abound which, though a little more formal in expression, have the forcible touch of his best conversational sallies. Some of the prejudices, which are expressed more pithily in Boswell are defended by a reasoned exposition in the *Lives*. Sentence is passed with the true judicial air; and if he does not convince us of his complete impartiality, he at least bases his decisions upon solid and worthy grounds. It would be too much, for example, to expect that Johnson should sympathize with the grand-republicanism of Milton, or pardon a man who defended the execution of the blessed martyr. He failed, therefore, to satisfy the ardent admirers of the great poet. Yet his judgment is not harsh or ungenerous, but, at worst, the judgment of a man striving to be just in spite of some inevitable want of sympathy.

"The quality of Johnson's incidental remarks may be inferred from one or two brief extracts. Here is an observation which Johnson must have had many chances of verifying. Speaking of Dryden's money difficulties, he says, 'it is well known that he seldom lives frugally who lives by chance. Hope is always liberal, and they that trust her promises, make little scruple of revelling to-day on the profits of the morrow'."

Giving an estimate of Johnson as a critic Atkins

has observed in his book, *English Literary Criticism* (17th and 18th centuries) : "With the varied critical activities of Johnson now in mind—his scattered theorizing, his judgments on Shakespeare and a whole array of poets—what is there to be said of his critical achievements as a whole ? As has already been hinted, since his day he has been subjected to some surprising judgments, perhaps more so than any other of the great critics. If not actually abused, he has been presented, more often than not, in apologetic fashion, with much confident explanation of his manifold defeats ; the chief complaint being that as he lacked the sympathetic imaginative temperament for revealing the finer literary effects, and so failed to let us into the secrets of the poetic appeal. But this is by no means the whole trouble ; his criticism has also been said to suffer from sundry prejudices, from a narrow conception of what poetry really is, as well as from his methods of forming and pronouncing judgment while he has also been denounced as a rigid moralist and a determined foe of all innovation. Apart from this further alleged defects have been gathered from isolated fragments of his doctrine and judgment, which, torn from their context and therefore distorted, have been accepted as a sound basis for a final evaluation. Thus he has been grouped, for instance, among the neo-classical critics ; for did he not make use of Bossu's categories in his treatment of Milton. Or again that he was surely lacking in the historical sense was held to be indicated by his references to the 'savagery' of Elizabethan times, and his want of sympathy with yet earlier periods of English poetry. Then, too, there were those unhappy comments on *Lycidas* and Gray ; and beside all this, to his judg-

ments in general he brought as his tests settled principles of his own, whereas the enlightened critics of a later day sought the touchstone of excellence in the work of the poet itself. So that, altogether, despite substantial work in connexion with Shakespeare and other English poets, he created in the minds of some the impression of an obtuse, dogmatic and ponderous critic, who hindered, for the time being, an aesthetic appreciation of literature, and was in fact little more than a prosaic critic in an age of prose.

"Yet this after all is but a superficial and shallow judgment ; for his performance, to be rightly appreciated or even understood, must be viewed, not in the light of 19th century theory and practice, but against an 18th century background with its special problems and its shortened horizon where poetry was concerned. That he had his defects must of course be granted. It is true that he had prejudices, both personal and literary, that he was blind to many of those 'nameless and inexplicable graces' that go to the making of great poetry, that he disliked irregular metres, elaborate rhyming systems, the pastoral convention, short poems and the like, and that, despite his regard for the critical and historical work of the Wartons, he had but little sympathy with their liking for earlier poetry. Moreover, he would limit the themes of literature to the known world of human society and experience ; he frequently indulged in mere verbal fault-finding which at other times he denounced ; while his robust downright form of utterance was not calculated to win all readers. Over and above all this, however, was his reliance on Nature or reason as his main instrument for forming literary judgment, 'imagination' being to him mere 'fancy'. It was a test which was tanta-

mount to the prose understanding, or good sense, with its 'intuitive perception of what was fitting and in accordance with the demands of human nature ; but it was also one which in the absence of an imaginative element, fell short of being the highest aesthetic touchstone, and could not but fail to sound the deeper mysteries of literary art.

"On the other hand, when viewed in its proper setting Johnson's criticism will be found to possess many positive qualities of lasting value for his own and later generations. Not least significant was his settlement of a much vexed question, when, refusing to accept neo-classicism as his creed, rejecting also the test of mere individual taste, he found in the law of Nature or reason his guide ; and in thus making his main test the appeal to the mind of rational man, he gave direction to contemporary criticism, and prepared the way at least for reasoned psychological methods yet more effective, when the mind of man had been fully explored. At the same time manifest critical abuses he successfully ridiculed commending besides numerous precepts of lasting value, such as, the importance of the tests of time and universality of appeal as ultimate criteria of literary value, of necessity for judging a work of art as a whole or again, the need for taking into account historical considerations in forming literary judgment. Moreover by his actual use of the biographical, historical and comparative methods in forming judgments, he emphasizes the value of such methods in throwing light on literary matters from various angles. As a thinker he is acute rather than profound ; and many of his ideas he assimilated from preceding critics. But only after careful scrutiny ; while his independence is shown by his fearless challenging of earlier writers

including Dryden, by whom, for the rest, he was definitely influenced. Moreover he was far from being the dogmatic, hide-bound critic he is sometimes made out to be. In his theorizing, for instance, he frequently gives expression to doubts and reservations in his desire for perfect accuracy; and in his appreciations he reveals a noteworthy openmindedness in welcoming innovations for which a reasoned case could be made. Thus from him came an early recognition of the possibilities of poetry dealing realistically with external nature; and this interest, betrayed in the works of Denham, Thomson, Dyer and later, Crabbe, not only accounts for his attack on the pastoral tradition, but also anticipates later notable developments in that field of literature.

"As a result he has handed down a body of critical judgments up to then unsurpassed in their wide scope, their original biographical detail, their keen and dispassionate psychological analysis within certain limits, and their scorn of affectations, humbug and all excesses. More successful in dealing with the Augustans than with earlier or later poets, and with prose works rather than with poetry, he opened up new ground with what is in effect the history of a whole century of English poetry; and while many of his judgments hold good to-day, have indeed become accepted as final, they are presented in a style, rhetorical and antithetic it may be, yet always clear, forceful and often picturesque. But what most appeals to present-day, readers is perhaps the essentially critical spirit, the sanity and ripe wisdom that inspire his generalization on life and letters. 'Great popularity in one age,' he states, 'is followed by neglect in the next. 'In every activity of valuing, the mind discovers in the

object that which is akin to itself.' 'About things on which the public thinks long it commonly attains to think right.' 'Pedantry is an unseasonable ostentation of learning.' 'Good humour is the balm of being.' These are critical commonplace which every age has to learn or re-learn. Since his day the critical spirit, having left the region of pure intellect, has soared freely in the realm of the imagination, and has laterly for better or for worse, explored tracts that lie beneath the level of the conscious. But Johnson reminds us that literature, whatever else it may be, is a vehicle of rational thought and articulate emotion, that it is subject to no rigid moral requirements, but is essentially, an uplifting power enabling men 'to enjoy life or to endure it,' thus making a contribution to the art of living. And these are welcome reminders in ages of perplexity. The unflattering reception which his critical work has sometimes since experienced was perhaps a natural reaction from an earlier adulation accorded to a dictator, though it may also have been due to excessive zeal for later 'romantic' doctrine ; while the absorption of critics finding into the stock of common knowledge has not infrequently led to a forgetfulness of the ultimate source of those ideas. Yet it is as a master who helped in changing the current of critical ideas that he figures in critical history. Having made use of psychological tests and having revealed incidentally the limits of the prose understanding for critical purposes, he unconsciously prepared the way for the later triumphs of those who made imagination or the higher reason their criterion of poetic values. And for this and other reasons his claims to greatness as a critic admit of no dispute ; even though he was one who, 'attaining his full purpose, lost himself in

his own lustre.' "

12. Lessing, Goethe and other German Critics.

In the later part of the eighteenth century the leadership of literary criticism passed into the hands of the German scholars, writers and philosophers. Some great names among them are Lessing, Goethe, Schiller, Herder, Schlegel, and Hegel. Referring to this Wimsatt and Brooks have observed in their book, *Literary Criticism* : "German literary theory, caught at its outset, during the later 17th and early 18th centuries, in rigors of French classicism or engaged in the merely emancipatory (Miltonic, Addisonian, neo-Longinian, and pictorialist) counter efforts of the Swiss professors Breitinger and Bodmer, began with Lessing and some of his friends to rouse itself and threaten more radical announcements. The next two generations of German litterateurs, in league with transcendental philosophers and aesthesticians, were to take over the critical leadership which had passed in its classical phases through Italy and France and during the middle part of the 18th century was held by the British empiricists.

"Lessing himself in his series of dramatic reviews in the *Hamburg Dramaturgy*, written shortly after the Laokoon, turned a destructive scorn on the Voltairean heroic inflation of French classical drama and did much to modulate Corneillean admiration and Voltairean astonishment into the softer norm of 18th century pity. Yet Lessing was a classical critic, 'a new Preceptist', as Saintsbury has called him, a kind of Protestant Aristotlean, one who claimed to be looking back past Voltaire, Corneille, Scaliger, the neo-classic distorters to the pure classic idea. He did not 'hesitate to admit' that he considered the

Poetics of Aristotle to be as 'infallible as the Elements of Euclid'. 'I would dispose of his authority easily enough if I could dispose of his reasons.' We have seen how his attempt upon the neo-classic *ut pictura poesis* left that doctrine fundamentally untouched. The degree of romanticism that shows in Lessing consists in the humanitarian and compassionate shading of his ethical views on tragedy.

"Between Lessing and the next major figure in the rise of German critical theory, J. G. Herder, a rather distinct line will be drawn by a reader inclined to recognize some antithesis between the 'classic' and 'romantic'. In the voluminous criticism of Herder—for instance, in such representative works as his *Fragmente Zur deutschen litterateur* (1767) and his *Kritische Walder* (1769)—we find a group of radically new concerns centering in the relations of poetry to race, geography and history, and in the creative and symbolic powers of verbal expression. These were germinal and explosive ideas.

"The criticism of the Italian Renaissance, the annotated editions of the classics, the formal treatises, the 'defences' of poetry—had been a relatively deliberate and stolid performance circumspectly, even legalistically, argued by the servants of that day. The new renaissance of German romanticism was an eruption of notes, fragments, letters, conversation, pamphlets, prize essays, lectures, and systems enthusiastically thrown out by poets, novelists, translators, oracular professors and transcendental philosophers. Where the 16th century Italians had translated Aristotle, the Germans now translated Shakespeare and made him one of the main inspirations. At the

same time, Goethe played the role of a contemporary demi-urge and seemed to his fellows the very incarnation of the theories they were developing. Among literary expressions of first importance appear the various essays of Goethe and his retrospectively dramatic *Conversations*.

"One historical question with which the German critics were much occupied was that concerning the difference between 'classic' and 'romantic'. The term 'romantic' had come a long way from its early neo-classic uses largely either neutral or relating to medieval adventure stories written in the romance languages. During the 18th century the term had gained so much ground that it now became available to the German critics as an honorific, if problematic, name of a central and dynamic literary conception. The Jena professor and Shakespeare translator A. W. Schlegel devoted the first of his Vienna *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature* (1808) to rebuking neo-classic exclusiveness and pleading for a universality of true criticism'.

"The groundwork of human nature is no doubt everywhere the same; but in all our investigations, we may observe that, throughout the whole, range of nature, there is no elementary power so simple but that it is capable of dividing and diverging into opposite directions. The whole play of vital motion hinges on a harmony and contrast. Why, then, should not this phenomenon recur on a grander scale in the history of man? In this idea we have perhaps discovered the true key to the ancient and modern history of poetry and the fine arts".

"Those who have adopted this idea have given to the peculiar spirit of modern art, as contrasted with antique or classical, the name of 'romantic'. Schlegel's populari-

zation of the 'romantic' idea was further broadcast over Europe by Madame Stael in her De L'Allemagne. Coleridge began to use the term and the distinction in his lectures of 1811. Romanticism was a highly self-conscious literary movement.

"The German critics conceived classical art to be direct, objective, and happily unsophisticated communion with nature and romantic (or modern) art to be a view of nature complicated, somewhat unhappily by various phases of reflexiveness and subjectivity. As long as nature had been sound on the inside of man, he could look at it outside him simply and without tampering. When nature in modern times had gone wrong inside him, he looked on nature outside with nostalgic projections, he invested it with a shimmer of his own yearning personality. Modern art, said Goethe's younger friend, the poet philosopher of Jena, Friedrich Schiller, in his definitive essay *Uber naive und sentimentalishe Dichtung* (1795), is a striving toward an ideal synthesis (of intellect and feeling) which is in its very nature unrealizable but which is nevertheless a higher thing than the once perfect, now irrecoverable, naive. Schelling, in his *Philosophic der kunst*, dwelt on the harmony between man and nature which had found adequate symbols in pagan mythology, and on the breach between man and God which it was the dialectical role of Christianity to create and the resulting unsatisfied, infinite yearning of which modern literature was fated to be the inadequate allegory. Friedrich Schlegel, closely echoing the ideas of Schiller, talked about a progressive *universal poesie*. Classic art was conceived by the German critics as 'beauty'; romantic art as 'energy'. Classic was plastic (like sculpture), finite closed pure in genre. Romantic

was picturesque (like painting), infinite, open, mixed.

"In a late polemical statement aimed against the French romantics Goethe said :

> 'I call the classic *healthy*, the romantic *sickly*.—In this sense, the Nibelungenlied is as classic as the Iliad for both are vigorous and healthy. Most modern productions are romantic not because they are new, but because they are week, morbid, and sickly ; and the antique is classic, not because it is old but because it is strong, fresh, joyous, and healthy.'

"He was in a somewhat creatively reminiscent mood when he made the following statement but it will serve here as a summary dramatization of the antithesis as we have been describing.

" 'The idea of the distinction between classical and romantic poetry, which is now spread over the whole world, and occasions so many quarrels and divisons, came originally from Schiller and myself. I laid down the maximum of objective treatment in poetry, and would allow no other ; but Schiller, who worked quite in the subjective way, deemed his own fashion the right one, and to defend himself against me, wrote the treatise upon *Naive and Sentimental Poetry*. He proved to me that I myself, against my will, was romantic, and that my *Iphigenia*, through the predominance of sentiment, was by no means so classical and so much in the antique spirit as some people supposed.'

"The Schlegels took up this idea, and carried it further so that it has now been diffused over the whole world ; and every one talks about classicism and romanticism of which nobody thought fifty years ago.

"From a neutrally retrospective standpoint, one might observe that German romantic poetry and criticism were

hardly at all primitive or 'natural' in the sense that English nature poetry was. German romanticism was historical, Hellenic, actually classic, in an appeal not to Aristotle, but to Homer and the tragic dramatists. It was a spirited and vastly aspiring revision of Winckelmannian classicism. The main paradox of the romantic mind was that it yearned for a primitive or direct nature, yet was compelled to do this through the medium of its own historical awareness and introspective virtuosity.

"A further phase in the dialectic of classic versus romantic is marked by Hegel's massively systematic revision of romantic theory, his *Lectures on Aesthetics* (1835) or, as the work is now known in English, *Philosophy of Fine Art*. Hegel divides all art into three stages : first symbolic—where, as in Egyptian pyramids and temples, the activity of spirit or idea only half struggles forth from the mass of matter ; second classic—where, as in Greek sculpture, idea (form) and matter are perfectly fused ; and third romantic—where, as in modern music, painting and (above all) poetry, spirit overflows and envelops matter in self-conscious fulness. There was more moral energy here, less beauty, than in the classic. As Schiller had put it, all art arises out of two impulses and balance these variously—the finite material impluse (Stofftrieb) and the infinite impulse of the idea (Formtrieb). The reconciliation of these is the fine 'play' of the whole human person (Spieltrieb). The novelist Jean Paul Richter in his *Vorschule der Asthetik* (1804) spoke of two extremes, the materialist and the empty idealist (or nihilist), both of which missed the mean of true form and art. It would not be a great exaggeration to say that all German romantic criticism was devoted to the problem of how literature

reconciles sensory experience and ideas (the 'particular' and the 'universal' of Warton's and Johnson's thinking). Their criticism was hence, at higher levels of speculation, devoted to the problem of how literature reconciles the worldly with the transcendental, the external and dubious material object with the spiritually reliable and self-aware subject, the outer world of 'nature and scientific observation with the inner world of schemes and of will and morals, the contingent world of *history* with the necessary world of *system*'."

The most important critical work produced in this period in Germany was Lessing's *Laocoon*, in which he discussed the relation between poetry and painting. Referring to *Laocoon*, Wellek has observed in his book, *A History of Modern Criticism* : "*Laocoon* starts with an empirical problem suggested by the statue of Laocoon, the Trojan priest depicted as two huge snakes attack him and his two sons at the bidding of Apollo who wanted to punish his warnings against the taking of the wooden horse into Troy. This marble group was found in Rome in 1506 and was quickly identified as the work referred to by Pliny, who mentions its sculptors, Hogesandros, Polydoros, and Athenodoros of Rhodes. The statue was admired throughout the 16th and 17th centuries as one of the foremost known works of classical sculpture ; a Latin poem composed in the year of its discovery by Giacopo Sadoleto bears witness that the group was admired for its violent expression, its naturalistic depiction of horrible pain. In their exaggerated stree's on muscles, 17th century copies show the cult of anatomy and the baroque taste for horror which the group seems to have satisfied. But J. J. Winckelmann, in his *Gedanken uber*

die Nachahmung der griechischen werke in der Malerei und bildhauerkunst (1755), challenged the current Interpretation. Laocoon to him shows a 'great and composed soul despite all passions......this pain does not reveal itself with any fury either in the face or in the whole posture'. The Laocoon of the staute 'does not intone a fearful shout, as Virgil sings of his *Laocoon*. The opening of the mouth does not allow it ; it is rather an anxious and oppressed groan. The pain of the body and the greatness of the soul are distributed and so to speak balanced throughout the entire frame of the figure with equal strength. Laocoon suffers, but he suffers like the Philoctetes of Sophocles. His misery touches our soul but we would wish to be able to beat misery like this great man.' Thus Laocoon confirms Winckelmann's generalization about Greek art, its 'noble simplicity and calm grandeur'. Lessing accepts Winckelmann's description of the statue, but objects to the comparison with Philoctetes and to the generalization about Greek art and literature. Philoctetes shouts, laments, curses, groans, and howls. Venus, though only scratched, screams in Homer. Mars roars, the dying Hercules cries and bellows with pain. Lessing concludes his first chapter saying : 'If it be true that a cry at the sensation of bodily pain, particularly according to the ancient Greek way of thinking, is quite compatible with greatness of soul, it cannot have been for the sake of expressing such greatness that the artist avoided imitating this shriek in marble.' Rather sculpture and painting were limited to the depiction of beautiful bodies. Beauty (and here this obviously means physical beauty) was the highest law of the plastic arts. In an ancient picture of the sacrifice of Iphigenia, Aga-

memmon is shown hiding his face and the sculptor of the Laocoon likewise had to reduce the pain. He must soften the shrieks to sighs, not because a shriek would have betrayed an ignoble soul but because it would have produced a hideous contortion of the countenance. Virgil can tell us of Laocoon shrieking it does not occur to anybody that a side open mouth is necessary for shouting and that a big mouth is ugly. Slowly Lessing works up to a theoretical statement :

" 'If it is true that painting and poetry in their imitations make use of entirely different means or signs... if these signs indisputably require an adequate relation to the thing signified.....then it is clear that signs arranged in juxtaposition can only express subjects of which the wholes or parts exist in juxtaposition ; while consecutive signs can only express subjects of which the wholes or parts are themselves consecutive. Subjects whose wholes or parts exist in juxtaposition are called bodies. Bodies with their visible properties are the peculiar subjects of painting. Subjects whose wholes or parts are consecutive are called actions. Actions are the peculiar subject of poetry. Still, bodies do not exist in space only but also in time. They endure, and in each moment of their duration may assume a different appearance, or stand in different combination. Each of these momentary appearances and combinations is the effect of a preceding one, may be the cause of a subsequent one, and is, therefore, as it were, the centre of an action. Consequently, painting too can imitate actions but only indicatively by means of bodies. On the other hand, actions cannot exist themselves, they must depend on certain beings. So far, therefore, as these beings are bodies, or are regarded as

such. Poetry depicts bodies, but only indicatively, by means of action. Painting can only make use of a single instant of the action, and must, therefore, choose the one which is the most pregnant......Poetry in its progressive imitation is confined to the use of a single property of bodies and must, therefore, choose that which calls up the most sensuous image of the body......'

"This central distinction has practical consequences of considerable importance. For painting, it means the condemnation of allegory and of much of what the time considered the highest genre of painting, history painting, as well as sequences of scenes in one picture, which Lessing calls 'an intrusion of the painter into the realm of the poet which good taste will never approve of'. It leads to speculations about the faithful, the most pregnant moment. In literature it leads to a condemnation of enumerative description and implicitly of the descriptive poetry of the time which had flourished since the enormous success of Thomson's *Seasons* in Germany with such imitators as Brockes, Haller, and Ewald von Kleist. The Horatian saying *ut pictura poesis*, which had served for centuries as the basis for comparison of the arts, is thus rejected both for painting and for poetry. Lessing is also arguing here against theories widely held at the time. Joseph Spence's *Polymetis* is specifically condemned, because Spence had stated that 'scarce anything can be good in poetical description which would appear absurd if represented in a statue or a picture.' The Comte Caylus had argued in his *Tableaux tires de l' Iliade* (1757) that the more a poem furnishes images and actions which can be painted the greater it is as a poem, and he had gone through the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and the *Aeneid* making

suggestions for paintings. Thus Lessing was not tilting at windmills. He quotes a descriptive passage from Albrecht von Haller's *Alpen* enumerating plants and flowers, and insists that unless we have seen them before we cannot get any kind of visual image from it. He quotes Ariosto's description of the fay Alcina to prove that we cannot visualize her even though the author describes her hair, her forehead, her eyebrows, her lips, her teeth, her neck, and her breasts in great detail. Such enumerative description is contrasted with the method employed by Homer to suggest beauty. Helen appears in the assembly of the Trojan elders and the elders speak to each other: 'Nobody should blame the Trojans and Achaeans for suffering misery so long for such a woman.' 'What Homer could not describe by its constituent parts he lets us acknowledge in its effect. Paint for us, you poets, the delight, the affection, the love, the rupture, which beauty produces, and you have painted beauty itself.' The poet, besides showing the effects of beauty, can also show us beauty in motion, namely charm. Poetry, unlike painting, can also afford to depict extreme ugliness, thus to arouse mixed feelings of laughter and terror as for Thersites in Homer or Richard III in Shakespeare. Yet Lessing condemns the repulsive and disgusting both in painting and poetry, quoting for poetry description of hunger from Dante (Ugolino) and from Beaumont and Fletcher (*The Sea Voyage*). The last chapters of the *Laocoon* are taken up with archaeological points *e.g.*, an argument against Winckelmann's view that the statue of Laocoon belongs to the time of Alexander the Great. Lessing is anxious to date it after Virgil's *Aeneid* and puts it as late as the reign of Emperor Titus.

Modern archaeological research has found inscriptions in Rhodes which show that the sculptors must have worked about the years 50 B.C. thus preceding the *Aeneid*."

13. Coleridge.

The greatest English critic during the Romantic period was Coleridge. Coleridge stands very high among the great literary critics of the world, and his name is mentioned along with Aristotle and Longinus. Referring to this Wellek has observed in his book. *A History of Modern Criticism* (Romantic Age) : "The reputation of Samuel Taylor Coleridge as a philosopher and critic stands today higher than ever. Saintsbury eliminated one after another of possible contenders for the title of greatest critic and concluded : 'So, then, there abide these three, Aristotle, Longinus and Coleridge.' Arthur Symons called *Biographia Literaria* 'the greatest book of criticism in English.' Since then—in spite of occasional demurrers—Coleridge's stature, at least in the English-speaking world, has grown even greater. J. H. Muirhead has proclaimed Coleridge the founder of the voluntaristic form of idealistic philosophy, of which 'he remains to this day the most distinguished representative.' I.A. Richards has hailed Coleridge as a forerunner of the modern science of semantics. Coleridge's 'step across the threshold of a general theoretical study of language was of the same type as that which took Galileo into the modern world.' Herbert Read considers Coleridge ' as head and shoulders above every other English critic' and sees him anticipating existentialism and Freud. Most recent American literary critics discuss none of the older critics except Coleridge's principle of the reconciliation of opposites to

his definition of the imagination, to the idea of the organic whole and to his distinction between symbol and allegory."

Coleridge's main contribution to literary criticism was his theory of Imagination. Explaining this Scott-James has observed in his book, *The Making of Literature* : "The bent of Coleridge's mind was not determined by those German thinkers whom he was afterwards to find so congenial. The world which was ready for German transcendentalism, ready for Wordsworth and Shelley, ready for the intense passion of revolution, found, in the young Coleridge, an apt interpreter of its spirit. Looking back upon his youth, in the *Biographia Literaria*, he tells that he felt but little sympathy for the writings of Mr. Pope and his followers, or 'that school of French poetry' which he admits, was 'condensed and invigorated by English understanding'. He was equally dissatisfied with the artifice of this school, and with the quest for 'mere novelty'—'the desire of exciting wonderment at his powers in the author.' More to his taste were the poems of Bowles and Cowper, the first, then living, poets 'who combined natural thoughts with natural diction ; the first who reconciled the heart with the head.'

"The union of heart and head. There he already strikes the keynote. Nothing without that is ever to be *essential poetry* for him. When, as young man in the early twenties he concludes 'that, not the poem which we have read, but that to which we return, with the greatest pleasure, possesses the genuine power, and claims the name of essential poetry,' we are reminded of Longinus, whom at that time he probably had not read. Coleridge finds that it was 'a continuous *undercurrent* of feeling,

which evoked his genuine admiration in a great poet, and the lack of it which disgusted him with those who 'sacrificed the heart the head,' or both heart and head to point and drapery'.

"He was already of this mind when he first came to know William Wordsworth. One dramatic moment in the first year of this friendship awoke in him the conviction which thence forward dominated his critical attitude :

> 'While memory lasts, I shall hardly forget the sudden effect produced on my mind, by his recitation of a manuscript poem...There was here no mark of strained thought, or forced diction, no crowd or turbulence of imagery......It was not however the freedom from false taste......which made so unusual an impression on my feelings immediately and subsequently on my judgment. It was the union of deep feeling with profound thought, the fine balance of truth in observing with the imaginative faculty in modifying the objects observed ; and above all the original gift of spreading the tone, the *atmosphere*, and with it the depth and height of the ideal world around forms, incidents and situations, of which, for the common view, custom had bedimmed all the lustre, had dried up the sparkle and dewdrops.........
>
> 'This excellence, which in all Mr. Wordsworth's writings is more or less predominant and which constitutes the character of his mind, I no sooner felt, than I sought to understand. Repeated mediations were two distinct and widely different faculties, instead of being according to the general belief, either two names with one meaning, or at furthest, the lower and higher degree of one and the same power......Milton had a highly *imaginative*, Cowley a very *fanciful* mind. If therefore I should succeed in establishing the actual existences of two faculties generally different, the nomenclature would be at once determined.'

Thus we are introduced to the first conception of that theory of imagination which became the cardinal element in Coleridge's principle of criticism. And here let us mark the fact—and beg the attention of destructive philosophic critics who bring their professional heavy guns to bear upon him that this conviction in his mind did not begin as deduction from metaphysical principles. It was in the first place, a practical conviction drawn from experience, from his working knowledge of and feeling for poetry and nature. Years later, after prolonged wrestling with the problems of metaphysics, he thought himself into a philosophical justification and explanation of it. But in expounding his system he did less than justice to himself and his readers. He discoursed of it in lectures which have been lost. There are scrappy allusions to it in his letters. He elaborately leads up to it in long discursive passages in the *Biographia* but as he approaches the crucial chapter which was to set forth his theory in full, he breaks off abruptly, giving no more than an epitome, in a few sentences, of 'the main result.' With the characteristic clumsiness of his later life he leaves us to piece together his metaphysical doctrine as best we can.

"But he has left us in no doubt about what I have called the practical conviction, which entered deeply into his mind before he attempted a metaphysical account of it. And this, which is an experience-fact, is perhaps what will have most weight with us and may stand where the ingenuity of a system may fail.

"Let us see how the problem arose for him. He read the 'faulty elder poets' and his contemporaries with perfunctory admiration. He could not discern in them that continuous 'undercurrent of deep feeling' which the

greater poets had evoked.

"'Then, in one memorable hour, poem recited by Wordsworth brought home to him in a flash what he had been seeking to realize. Surely it was by some faculty of the soul that things could be so represented to be thus both felt and understood. No mere heaping together of lifeless images, no mere juxtaposition of ideas, no mere 'arbitrary bringing together of things that lie remote'—could account for the indissoluble oneness of this perception of beauty and conviction of truth. The psychologists had dissected the human consciousness and shown nothing there but a collection of impressions, images, notions—all dead, cold, and empty. The 'fanciful' poets had called upon memory and the mechanical power of associating ideas, and ingeniously presented us with 'aggregates'—not living images. But when a poet like Wordsworth handled the material which nature presents—that very material which, mechanically received through the senses, is just sensation and no more—something happened to it. It was itself, but it became different. It assumed a form. It became beautiful. The heart warmed to it. The understanding embraced it. For this experience, as Coleridge understood it, was more than mere feeling, emotion, passion. Its unique quality lay in the fact that it gave satisfaction also to the reason. It was a union of opposites. It bridged the gulf—unbridgable by the intellect—between perception and understanding. The power which the poet had exercised in thus revealing the 'beautiful and permanent forms of nature' was the 'shaping spirit of Imagination,' a unifying, creative faculty—'this beautiful and beauty-making power'."

"It is the imagination, then (the 'primary'), which in

every human consciousness—presents to the mind its own world as external to itself. And it is the imagination (the 'secondary') in a rarer and more active capacity that of the artist—which represents and recreates this external world in its fuller nature, namely as that which is congenial to the spirit, and actually its own. Thus Coleridge, in his all too brief resume :

> 'The *Imagination*, then, I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary *Imagination* I hold to be the living power and prime 'Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary *Imagination* I consider as an echo of the former, coexisting with the conscious will ; yet still as identical with primary in the *kind* of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate ; or where this process is rendered impossible yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially vital as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead......
>
> 'Fancy, on the contrary, has no other counters to play with, but fixities, the fancy is indeed no other than a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space......'

"Perhaps we may say that it is the characteristic of the artistic Imagination always to achieve the miraculous —always to break down that seemingly insuperable barrier between mind and matter. 'To make the external interval, the internal external, to make nature thought and thought nature—this is the mystery of genius in the Fine Arts. Dare I add that the genius must act on the feeling, that body is but a striving to become mind—that it is mind in its essence !' It is by reason of something in common between Nature and his own soul that the artist

is able to create the forms of nature according to his ideal. That limited nature which he sees with his eyes, hears with his ears, constitutes the finite objects of his consciousness. But all Nature in its infinite totality he seems to conceive, not as God, but as the objective thought of God. And I think Coleridge means that it is by virtue of the (unexplained) association of the Reason of man with the Reason of God that man's imagination is able to discern the externalized thought of God in the forms of Nature. Thus Nature in a certain sense seems to be imposed on him ; but, in proportion as his imagination is an echo of God's he recreates it as his own. "Believe me, you must master the essence, *the nature naturans*, which presupposes a bone between nature in the higher sense and the soul of man.

"If that be so, it might be asked, why is the artist never content just to copy mere nature. Two answers instantly present themselves. Firstly, 'What idle rivalry', the art of God is the totality of nature—nothing less—and its unity and beauty lies in its indivisible wholeness. Fragments stolen from nature would be nature disunified, broken, without character of beauty.

"And, secondly, the mind, when the imagination is not active, presents to itself only dead, mechanical nature, bare sensation, memory, associated ideas, at best the creation of Fancy—nature, without the life that makes it what it is. Coleridge seems to mean that only by ceaseless creation can that which is created remain alive ; that nature is the art of God because the divine imagination is active in it ; and that it is material for the art of man just so far as man's creative imagination is re-creating and ever-recreating it. Its very life, its

character, depends upon being actively created. And so the imagination cannot be content to 'copy'. Its function is to diffuse, dissolve and recreate ; to make the external, fashioning new images in its own semblance, in its effort to become divine.

"'And so in all artistic creation there will be 'imitation', but not 'copying'. In all 'imitation' there is 'likeness and unlikeness, or sameness and difference.'

> 'If there be likeness to nature without any check of difference, the result is disgusting, and the more complete the delusion, the more loathsome the effect. Why are such simulations of nature, as wax-work figures of men and women, so disagreeable ? Because not finding the motion and life which we expected we are shocked as by a falsehood, every circumstance of detail, which before induced us to be interested, making the distance from truth more palpable.' "

Giving an estimate of Coleridge as a critic, Saintsbury has observed in his book, *A History of English Criticism* : "In this and that critic, of the many ages which a historian has to survey, we may find critical graces which are not in him ; but in all, save two, we shall find corresponding deficiencies. In all the ancient critics, save these two, the limitation of the point of view, the hamper of the scheme, are disastrously felt, nor is either Aristotle or Longinus quite free from them. In the greatest of the sixteenth century Italians the limitations recur, and are repeated in most of those of the seventeenth and eighteenth. Dante is of the greatest, but he touches the subject very briefly and from a special side. Dryden is great, but he is not fully informed, and comes too early for his own point of view. Fontenelle is very nearly great, but he has the same drawbacks, and adds to them

those of an almost, perhaps a quite, wilful eccentricity and capriciousness. Lessing is great, but he has fixed his main attention on the least literary parts of literature; while Goethe later is great but a great pedant. Hazlitt is great; but Coleridge was Hazlitt's master, and beside the master the pupil is insular and parochial in range and reading if not in spirit. In Sainte-Beuve himself we want a little more theory; some more enthusiasm; a higher and more inspiriting choice of subjects. And in Mr. Arnold the defects of Fontenelle reappear with Fontenelle's excuse of chronology.

"So, then there abide these three, Aristotle, Longinus, and Coleridge. The defects of the modern, as contrasted with the ancient, man of letters are prominent in Coleridge when we compare him with these his fellows; and so we cannot quite say that he is the greatest of the three. But his range is necessarily wider; he takes in, as their date forbade them to take, all literature in a way which must for centuries to come give him the prerogative. It is astonishing how often, when you have discovered in others of all dates, or (as you may fondly hope) found out for yourself, some critical truth, you will remember that after all Coleridge in his wanderings has found it before, and set it by the wayside for the benefit of those who come after. For all, I believe, of these later days—certainly for all whose mother tongue is English—Coleridge is the critical author to be turned over by day and by night. Never take him on trust: it is blasphemy to the Spirit of Criticism to do that with any critic. Disagree with him as often as you like and as you can stand to the guns of your disagreement. But begin with him, continue with him, come back to him

after excursions, with a certainty of suggestion, stimulation, correction, edification. *Cest mon metier a moid, etre professeur de literature*, and I am not going to *parvify* my office. But if any body disestablished us all (with decent pensions, of course), and applied the proceeds of our chairs to furnishing the boxes of every one who goes up to the University with a copy of the *Biographia Literaria* I should decline to be the person chosen to be heard against this revolution, though I should plead for the addition of the *Poetics* and of Longinus.

"And if any one is still dissatisfied with particular critical utterances, and even with the middle axioms interspersed among them, let him remember that Coleridge—not Addison, not the Germans, not any other—is the real introducer into the criticism of poetry of the realising and disrealising imagination as a criterion. Even a hundred years more after his earliest days as a critic, the doctrine, though much talked of, is apparently little understood. Even such a critic as the late Mr. Traill, while elsewhere admitting that 'on poetic *expression*' Coleridge 'has spoken the absolutely last word' almost apologised for his putting on a level 'lending the charm of imagination to the real' and 'lending the force of reality to the imaginary'. He confessed that, 'from the point of view of the highest conception of the poet's office there can be no comparison —'where indeed I might 'also say ditto to Mr. Burke,' but in a sense opposite to his. And, if on such a mind and such an appreciation as Mr. Traill's this one-sided interpretation of 'the esenoplastic faculty' had hold, how much more on others in increasing measure to the present day? The fallacy is due, first, to the hydra-like vivacity of the false idea of *mimesis* the notion that it is not re-

presentation, re-creation adding to Nature, but copying her ; and, secondly, to the Baconian conception of poetry as a *vinum doemonum*, a poison with some virtue as medicine. What power these errors have all our history has shown—all Histories of Criticism that ever can be written will show if they are written faithfully. But Coleridge has provided—once for all, if it be not neglected, the safeguard against this in his definitions of the two, the co-equal, the coeternal functions of the exercise of the poetic imagination."

14. Wordsworth and Shelley.

Wordsworth and Shelley also made considerable contribution to the theory of poetry. Referring to their contribution Scott James has observed in *The Making of Literature* : "From the blurred theories of Blake we turn to the more explicit principles of Wordsworth set forth in the Prefaces to *Lyrical Ballads*. Wordsworth proceeds from the same starting point—dislike of the artifice and restricted forms of approved eighteenth century poetry. Disgusted by the 'gaudiness and inane pharseology of many modern writers,' he castigates poets who 'separate themselves from the sympathies of men, and indulge in arbitrary and capricious habits of expression, in order to furnish food for fickle tastes, and fickle appetites, of their own creation.'

"Just as Blake turns from literary artifice to 'Enthusiasm and Life', no inspiration to the inner light of the Imagination, so Wordsworth turns to the inner evidence of vivid sensation and spontaneous feelings. 'All good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'. He, too, discards Aristotelian doctrine. For him the plot, or situation, is not the first thing. It is the feeling that

matters. In his own poems, 'the feeling therein developed gives importance to the action and situation and not the action and situation to the feeling'. And just as Blake's imagination was justified because it was inspired, so for Wordsworth strong feeling carried its own passport it revealed 'primary laws of our nature'. In the *Lyrical Ballads* he proposed to make incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them......primary laws of our nature ; chiefly, as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement'. But his innate artistic sense leads him to qualify these words ; primary laws are to be traced truly 'though not ostentatiously'. He too, betrayed uneasiness when he appeared to be setting the teachers to instruct the singer.

"His aim was to find the best soil for the 'essential passions'. In eschewing artifice, he looked for simplicity. He thought the problem was solved by the deliberate choice of subjects from 'humble and rustic life.' He had found poets extravagantly preoccupied with the affairs of nymphs and goddesses. Why not portray the deep emotions of village girls and peasants ? He was guided by a sound instinct when he said 'avoid poetic diction'. There was a healthy realism in the demand that the poet should use 'the language of men', 'the language of prose when prose is well written' ; and that he should aim to 'keep the reader in the company of flesh and blood.' But the flesh and blood of yokel are not more human than the flesh and blood of a townsman. The emotions of a rustic are not more profound because his experience is narrow. In rightly condemning a too specialized language of poetry. Wordsworth advocated a language that was always in danger of becoming trivial and mean. In

proportions as he confined himself too exclusively to characters chosen from humble and rustic life, he confined himself to persons for whom many essential elements in human experience were lacking. It was emotion which he sought to display. But his principle lessened the range without deepening the quality of emotion. It is when he most strictly obeys his own injunction that he writes his least satisfactory poems. The end he had in view could have been better attained by the portrayal not of crude rustic persons, but simple sharply defined characters in which a few qualities were deeply graven—heroes like O Edipus, or Lear, or Giles Winterbourne—characters set in some clear emotional relationship with the 'beautiful and permanent forms of Nature.'

"'In his romantic detestation of artifice, Wordsworth committed himself to the doctrine of artlessness. 'Poetry is spontaneous utterance'. Yet Dante had said that 'Poetry and the language proper for it are an elaborate and painful toil'. Wordsworth advocated a language that was to be the 'language of men,' and especially of men in 'humble and rustic life'. Dante, on the contrary, had said, 'Avoid rustic language.' Write in the vernacular, but let it be the 'Illustrious Vernacular.' Longinus, too, had required a certain loftiness and excellence of language; and the contrast to this was 'puerility'.

"'But we must remember that while Wordsworth like other romantics, demanded spontaneity, it was not that of a careless thoughtless person. 'Poems to which any value can be attached', he says, 'were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility whose mentality was already shaped, before the moment of inspira-

tion, by deep and habitual reflection. The pondering had already been done. The situation which was to affect him poignantly, awakening vivid emotions, would pass through the intellectual lens of his imagination to his fully prepared consciousness. Without further pondering, the response of the emotion sufficed to show that the imagination had truly functioned. It was in that crisis of the mind when sensation was vivid, when the faculties were taut and keen, when the whole of the poet's being trembled at the perception of beauty in the world about him, that he had the moment of his highest experience :

> ....the hour
> Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower.

The state of awareness of spiritual significance in common things was for Wordsworth the consummation of poetic experience, the *summum bonum* of the poet's life. This is the characteristic romantic view. And because they consciously held this view it was natural that the romantic poets, in their less happy moods, should tend to dwell too luxuriously on their own emotions, describing them from within, rather than the facts of life which evoked them. In these introspective moods we find them writing subjectively rather than objectively, and laying themselves open to the charges brought against them in the Crocean argument of Miss Powell, when she says that it is the business of the poet, not to be passive to impressions, but to express them ; not to wallow in emotion, but to purge it away in the spiritual energy of intuition.

"They are often guilty. But when they are, it is not because they are carrying out the avowed principles of Wordsworth or Coleridge—it is from a degenerate misapplication of those principles. When Keats writes :

> My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
> My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk

he gives us an intolerable example of sickly preoccupation with his own emotions. But the vivid experience for which Wordsworth looks is far more happily expressed when the poet recovers himself, in the following perfectly objective lines :

> That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees,
> In some melodious plot
> Of beaches green, and shadows numberless,
> Singst of summer in full-throated ease.

"Coleridge was as emphatic as Goethe in condemning the subjective exhibition of emotion, and pointed out that the man of genius chooses 'subjects very remote from the private interests and circumstances of the writer himself.' Any excess, of course, can shelter under a doctrine of spontaneity. But in the professed theory of Wordsworth and Shelley, while there is much which explains there is certainly nothing which demands, the subjective attitude to experience.

"It is true they rated experience, personal experience, very high. I think we may go so far as to say that Wordsworth valued art for the sake of experience, rather than experience for the sake of art. There was nothing he prized so much as the state of mind experienced in his happiest contemplation of Nature, and nothing he so much wished to hand on through his poems. We may clearly recognize and assert about Wordsworth, that the experience of the poet in contact with Nature was of supreme value to him ; and it was this certainty of its supreme worth which made him deem it a divine intimation. But tgis does not mean that the experience was best expressed

by analysing his feelings of the moment. On the contrary, just as it was called forth in him by the contemplation of Nature, so the poet would surely evoke it in others by showing them the same objects as had moved him, if possible under the same light. To extract in art the utmost value from a vivid experience consistent with a wholly objective artistic method.

The romantic poets started from an interest in life, rather than art. It was the worthwhileness of their impressions of life which mattered for them more than anything else, and it was this, they held, which gave value to poetry. A supremely interesting and primarily emotional state of mind, arising from the contemplation of life was postulated as a condition of art. If they had been confronted with Croce's expression of impression they would not have quarrelled with the demand for 'expression', but they would have laid all the emphasis on the quality of the 'impressions'. The 'impression' was the first important thing that happened to the poet. It was the only important thing which finally repeated itself in the mind of the reader. The point that drew their insistent attention was its quality, its worthwhileness—the desirables which poetry could communicate.

"Shelley's reasoned account of poetry naively justifies much that Matthew Arnold condemned in him. The 'beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain,' provides a defence of himself in his *Defence of Poetry*. 'Poetry', he says, 'in a general sense may be defined to be the expression of the imagination; and poetry is connate with the origin of man. Man is an instrument over which a series of external and internal impressions are driven, like the alternations of

an ever-changing wind over an Aeolian lyre, which move it by their motion to ever changing melody'. It is the divine mind which thus stirs the poet to effortless song, and impels him, he knows not how, to create, 'the very image of life expressed in its external truth'. A poem is 'the creation of actions according to the unchangeable forms of human nature, as existing in the mind of the creater which is itself the image of all other minds.' More than any other romantic critic he presents the poet moving in a world of other-worldiness, creating things in the image of his own spirit, and man in the image of an abstract God.

"It is feeling of ecstasy which he, like Wordsworth, values supremely ; and the presence of that feeling is for him the sign of inspiration and truth. Blake said that his poems were 'dedicated' to him ; Shelley, that they were breathed into him by 'some invisible influence' :

> A man cannot say, 'I will compose poetry'. The greatest poet even cannot say it ; for the mind in creation is as a fading coal, which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness......When composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline, and the most glorious poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is probably a feeble shadow of the original conceptions of the poet.

"When we read that, it will not do to say simply that Shelley is wrong. For Shelley is giving us evidence of what he felt to have happened in his own case, and as evidence we must accept it. Our question is, what does that evidence mean ? Certainly, that the feeling of illumination or rapture with which his creative mood started was more intense than his feeling when he was distracted by the labour of composition. Certainly, also, that what

he hoped to communicate to others in the poem was precisely than feeling of illumination or rapture which began to fade as he wrote. And surely most of poetry will go with him in pushing that the sense of that brightest moment of his downing intuition might be the very impression which his poem will impart. But Shelley affirms that in his own case this was not possible ; that he could give only of his second best ; that the spirit of his finest mood could never be fixed for ever in the created work.

"Now is this an essential defect in poetry, or is it a defect in Shelley's way of going to work ? Is it possible that he has neglected some part of his proper task ? He has himself provided the answer. It is when he echoes the view of Wordsworth, that poetry is 'spontaneous utterance'. 'I appeal to the greatest poets of the present', he says, 'whether it is not an error to assert that the finest passages of poetry are produced by labour and study.'

"Shelley thus admits his view that poetry should be a sort of sublime bird's song given forth with 'unpremeditated art'. But it was a greater than he who said that it should be an 'elaborate and painful toil'. Dante did not say that feeling, emotion, ecstasy come with pain and forethought. He, too, might have agreed that they come, unpremeditatedly, like the constant wind. But he did say that to transmute these into the language of art there must be pain, toil, elaboration. The view of Shelley and Wordsworth, based upon a doctrine of happy inspiration, makes poetry too easy for the poet. Theirs is a theory which dangerously panders to laziness, commending the poet when he yields to sensuous temptation and soars with the too easy and 'ineffectual' flight of the angel.

Too much belief in divine assistance led them to neglect the fact that the poet has to sit down and face squarely the hardness of the beautiful, and address himself to the technical job of expressing his feeling in recognisable terms of life, giving objective form to his ideas. Art has to be true to life—the life about us—as well as true to feeling—the feeling which is peculiarly the artist's. It is a part of the poet's job to discern with perfect clearness just what that is in Nature or in action which has or might have evoked the feeling that he thought worthwhile, so that he may set it forth again in imaginative language, for all who have eyes to see. Because it is his task to communicate, as well as to experience. he cannot afford to neglect any aid which work, thinking, technique can put at his disposal.

"There we have the weakness of the Romantic poets, to which their conscious theories led them. But these defects later generations could avoid. The gigantic positive achievement, which is inseparable from their theory, stands a monument for ever. They successfully maintained that poetry—or art—is the proper vehicle for the feelings. They declared once and for all that poetry could never be cleverness, never be prosody, never just correctness or the observation of rules. It can never be what the man with no 'music in his soul' can judge by a foot-rule or a book of grammer. It can never be compassed by learning. It can never consist in conceits, or fancies, or artifice of any kind, and will never deserve its name if it does not express perceptions of life received with conviction. From all those ingenuities and insincerities they rescued poetry, if not for ever, at least until affected people arrived with the jargon of 'Art for Art's sake', or

still cleverer people who persuade us to accept fascinating jig—saw toys for poetry. The Romantic poets did not think it enough to astonish. They thought it necessary also to 'move'.

"It will be the business of the poet so to speak in his verses that he may teach, that he may delight, that he may move. The third term in a definition of poetry—to 'move'—was definitely added by the Romantic poets."

15. Arnold.

After Aristotle, Arnold is the only critic who took his job seriously and laid down certain principles of criticism. Referring to this Scott-James has observed in his book, *The Making of Literature* : "Arnold did not merely criticize books himself. He taught others, how to criticize them. He laid down principles, if he did not always keep the principle he laid down. Nobody, after reading *Essay in Criticism* has any excuse for not being a critic.

"Thus, in 1902, wrote Herbert Paul his irony shielding him, in quite the modern way, against the assaults of Victorian earnestness. But he is more than half serious. How could he not be, since the spell of Matthew Arnold, years after his death, still imposed on the English world his conception of the critic's office ? Far away in a dim past was that age of Dryden when men repeated, 'Arnold has said so'. After a brief period of discord and anarchy we find ourselves once again faced with authority. Once again we are asked to follow what Herbert Paul calls 'principles' of criticism, laid down by an austere writer who 'taught others how to criticize'. For half a century Arnold's position in this country was comparable with that of the venerable Greek in respect of the wide influ-

ence he exercised, the mark he impressed upon criticism, and the blind faith with which he was trusted by his votaries."

Explaining the main critical ideas propagated by Arnold, Rawlinson has observed in his introduction to *Selected Essays of Matthew Arnold* : "Like Carlyle, he felt that religion must be dynamic, not static. Educated men can no longer believe in an anthropomorphic God, still less in the persistence of life after death or in miracles. Religion is 'morality tinged with emotion' ; God is 'that stream of tendency by which all things strive to fulfil the law of their being.' But for the Bible, both as literature and as a storehouse of profound reflections on human life, the *Confessions* of St. Augustine, the *Imitation*, St. Francis of Assisi, and above all for the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, he retained the greatest affection. He was never tired of reading, and quoting, his favourite chapters of Isaiah or St. Paul. To Arnold religion meant conduct —'He that doeth the will of the Father shall know of my doctrine.' Conduct is three-quarters of life ; and the way to the knowledge of truth lies on the road of Right doing. Matthew Arnold quotes with approval the injunction, Fear God and keep His Commandments and He constantly refers to what St. Paul calls the sweet Reasonableness, of Jesus Christ's teaching, as its crowning glory.

"What, then, is the remedy ? The remedy lies in Culture. And by Culture Matthew Arnold means love of the Beautiful. We cultivate a love of the Beautiful without effeminacy, was the proud boast of Pericles concerning ancient Athens. It was this that Arnold aimed at. And it was this which made him attach such paramount importance to poetry. The poet is the *Vates*, the seer. Poetry

is the Religion of the Future. 'This future of poetry is immense, because in poetry, where it is worthy of its high destinies, our race, as time goes on will find an ever surer and surer stay. There is not a creed which is not shaken, not an accredited dogma which is not shown to be questionable, not a received tradition which does not threaten to dissolve. Our religion has materialized itself in the fact, in the supposed fact; it has attached its emotion to the fact, and now the fact is failing it. But for poetry the idea is everything; the rest is a world of illusion, of divine illusion poetry attaches its emotion to the idea; the idea is the fact. The strongest part of our religion today is its unconscious poetry...More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry.' Poetry, in a word is to Arnold what it was to Wordsworth, 'the breath and spirit of all knowledge', 'the impassioned expression of what is in the countenance of all science'. And this leads us to another of Arnold's famous dicta, reiterated, *more suo* in essay after essay. Literature, and especially poetry, is a 'Criticism of Life.' 'The greatness of a poet lies in his powerful and beautiful application of ideas to life,—to the question How to live. A poetry of revolt against moral ideas is poetry of revolt against *life*; a poetry of indifference towards moral ideas is a poetry of indifference towards *life*. In poetry however, the criticism of life has to be made comfortably to the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty. Truth and seriousness of substance and matter, felicity and perfection of diction and manner, as these are exhibited in the

best poets, are what constitute a criticism of life made in conformity with the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty; and it is by knowing and feeling the work of those poets that we learn to recognize the fulfilment of such conditions.' 'Poetry' he tells us again, 'interprets in two ways: it interprets by expressing with magical felicity the physiognomy and movement of the outer world and it interprets by expressing with inspired conviction, the ideas and laws of the inward world of man's moral and spiritual nature. In other words poetry is interpretative by having natural magic in it, and by having moral profundity. And in order to achieve this the poet must aim at what Aristotle calls high and excellent seriousness, in all that he writes. This demands two essential qualities. The first is the choice, as he tells us in the 1853 preface, of excellent actions. The poet must choose those 'which most powerfully appeal to the great primary human affections; to those elementary feelings which subsist permanently in the race, and which are independent of time'. 'This, he points out, is the chief difference between the poetry of ancient Greece and that of modern Europe, With them, the poetical character of the action in itself, and the conduct of it, was the first consideration; with us, attention is fixed mainly on the value of the separate thoughts and images which occur in the treatment of an action. They regard the whole; we regard the parts. It was for this reason that Greek tragedy is limited to so small a range of subjects; there are so few actions which unite in themselves, in the highest degree, the conditions of excellence. The second essential is what Arnold calls the Grand style—perfection of form, choice of words drawing its force directly from the pregnancy of the

matter which it conveys.

"This, then, very briefly, is Arnold's conception of the nature and mission of true poetry. He has sometimes been blamed for exaggerating the ethical at the expense of the aesthetic side of his subject, and in this respect he presents a marked contrast to his younger contemporary, Walter Pater. Pater, and his school judge Art by one standard only, and that is the intensity of pleasurable emotion which it is capable of exciting in the beholder. It may, however, be maintained that these are only two sides of the same picture. 'Beauty', in Arnold's own words, 'is only truth in another aspect'. In his more detailed criticism, Arnold applies to individual poets the general principles which he has enunciated, and judges them by this test. Thus Chaucer, Burns, Dryden, Pope, and even Shelley, fall short of the best, because they lack 'high seriousness.' Even Shakespeare thinks too much of expression, too little of composition. Arnold's ideal poets are Homer and Sophocles in the ancient world, Dante and Milton, and among the moderns, Goethe and Wordsworth. Whether this does not lead to occasional inconsistencies and errors of judgment, is, of course, open to question. Many critics have placed Wordsworth, considered as a poet, on a lower level than Tennyson; certainly no poet can boast of larger number of prosaic lines. Arnold put him in the front rank, not for his 'criticism of life.' On the other hand, for one who makes the 'criticism of life' the basis of his literary judgments, it is scarcely consistent to place Byron in front of Shelley. Arnold's weakness for Byron has sometimes been attributed to Goethe's influence; it is, we suspect, equally due to the shrewd blows which Byron inflicted on Arnold

old enemies the Philistines. And perhaps we may trace his underestimate of Shelley's poetry to his disapproval of the details of the Shelley *Menage* revealed in Professor Dowden's *Life*. One can perhaps forgive the famous description of Shelley as a 'Beautiful but ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain', but it is hard to find an excuse for the extraordinary statement that 'his original poetry is less satisfactory than his translations' still less that 'his prose will finally come to stand higher than his poetry'. It is kindest to treat such things as the aberrations of genius. Prophecy is always dangerous and Arnold was in a rash mood when he wrote the concluding sentences of the Essay of Byron. But these are, after all, spots on the sun.

"As critic Matthew Arnold owed much on the one hand to Goethe ('the greatest critic of all time') and on the other to his favourite French critics, Renan and Sainte Beuve in particular. From them he gets his clarity, his studied moderation, his 'disinterestedness'. In *The Literary Influence of Academies* he deplores that anarchy of English literature, and contrasts it with the restraint and uniformity of style imposed by the French Academy. He sets out 'to cure the great vice of our intellect, manifesting itself in our incredible vagaries in literature, in art, in religion, in morals, namely, that it is *fantastic*, and wants *sanity*. He wants to convince his countrymen of their insularity, and to 'persuade them to cultivate a European outlook in literature. Criticism he defines as 'a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world', and Arnold strove hard to fulfil this aim in his own critical writings. He does not merely criticise what is far more

important, he teaches us to criticise for ourselves. Arnold's critical outlook has its limitations. Of the 'historic estimate,' for instance, he had the most profound distrust, and warns us against it in his essay on *The Study of Poetry*. His great object is to interpret his author, to gather up all the facts which throw light on the author's personality and aims, and to trace the connexion between these conditions and his excellencies and defects. He endeavours to supply the reader with the information necessary to form a proper background. Hence, for a purely literary estimate, an appreciation, in other words, of the author's work from the purely literary point of view, he is in his own way unrivalled. 'His lectures', says Sir Arthur Quiller Couch, 'struck a new note in criticism, and have influenced the standard of literary judgment ever since.' No one, remembering what Dryden did, and Johnson and Coleridge and Lamb, and Hazlitt, will pretend either that Arnold invented English Criticism or that he did well what they had done ill. What he did, and they had missed doing, was to treat Criticism as a deliberate disinterested Art with laws and methods of its own, a proper temper, and certain standards or touchstones of right taste by which the quality of any writing, as literature, can be tested ; and to lay down these lines at a moment when the practitioner of criticism most needed them—being without rules just then and following astray the brilliant but evil influences of Macaulay and Carlyle, whose success encouraged lesser writers to seek effectiveness rather than truth, and to indulge in sensational writing to the top of their bent. As a corrective of excess and caprice in Criticism the *Essays in Criticism* are invaluable, they have made it reasonably

certain that, would England produce another critic of equal power with Dr. Johnson, he will never write a *Life of Milton* such as Johnson's."

Giving an estimate of Arnold as a critic Saintsbury has observed in his book, *A History of English Criticism* : "Nevertheless, as has been said so often, the side which a man may have taken in the everlasting and irreconcilable critical battle of judges by the result, hardly affects his place in criticism as it should be allotted by a final Court of Appeal. How does he express for himself, and how does he promote in others, the intelligent appreciation, the conscious enjoyment of literature ? That is the question ; and few critics can meet this question more triumphantly than Mr. Arnold. Like others, he can but give what he has. If you ask him for a clear, complete, resumed and reasoned grasp of a man's accomplishment —for a definite placing of him in the literary atlas—he will not have much answer to give you. He does not pretend, and has never pretended, to give any. A certain want of logical and methodical aptitude, which may be suspected, a dislike of reading matter that did not interest him which is pretty clear, and that dread and distrust of the 'historic estimate,' which he openly proclaimed would have made this impossible. But we were warned at the very outset not to go to him for it. And for acute, sensitive, inspired, and inspiring remarks on the man or the work or this and that part of work and man attractively expressed, ingeniously co-cordinated and redeemed from mere desultoriness by the constant presence of the general critical creed no critic is his superior.

"Nor are these his only 'proofs'—his only 'pieces in hand.' He may be said—imperfectly Romantic, or even

anti-Romantic, as he was to have been the very first critic to urge the importance, the necessity, of that comparative criticism of different literatures, the half blind working of which had helped to create, if it had not actually created, the Romantic movement. In England he was absolutely the first to do this systematically and with something like—though not with complete impartiality, the knowledge of Spanish and Italian poetry and romance, long very common with us, had died down in the first half of the nineteenth century, and had not been much used for critical purposes while it lasted. The *engouement* for French of the late seventeenth and eighteenth, had reached itself—in men as different as Coleridge, Lendor, and De Quincey—into a depreciation, which if not violently absurd, as Mr. Arnold translates Remusat's term of *saugrenu* applied to it, was certainly either crassly ignorant or violently unjust. German had, it is true, been exalted on the ruins of the popularity of the three Romance literatures ; but it had been worshipped scarcely according to knowledge ; and of the whole mediaeval literature of Europe there was hardly any general critical appreciation. Mr. Arnold himself, in fact, was still too much in the gall of bitterness here. It was imperative, if the Romantic and 'result judging' criticism was not to become a mere wilderness of ill-founded and partial individualisms, that this comparison should be established. It was equally imperative that it should be established, if Mr. Arnold's own '*neota-to-classicism*', as we have called it, was not to wizen and ossify like neo-classicism itself. He was its first preacher with us ; and there had not, to my knowledge, been any such definite preacher of it abroad, though the practice of

Germany had implied and justified it from the first. And he was one of its most accomplished practitioners,—Lessing not being equal to him in charm, and Saint-Beuve a little his inferior in passion for the best things.

"Yet another watchword of his sovereign for the time and now in most countries, which he constantly repeated (if, being human, he did not always fully observe it himself), it was the caution against confounding literary and non-literary judgment. No one rejected the exaggeration of 'Art for Art's sake only' more unhesitatingly; but no one oftener repeated the caution against letting the idols of the nation, the sect, the party interfere with the free play of Art herself, and of critical judgment on Art.

"His services, therefore, to English Criticism, either as a 'preceptist', or as an actual craftsman, cannot possibly be over-estimated. In the first respect he was, if not, the absolute reformer—these things, and all things, reform themselves under the guidance of the Gods and the Destinies,—not of men the leader in reform of the slovenly and disorganised condition into which Romantic Criticism had fallen. In the second, the things which he had not, as well as those which he had, combined to give him a place among the very first. He had not the sublime and ever new—inspired inconsistency of Dryden. Dryden in Mr. Arnold's place might have begun by cursing Shelley a little, but would have ended by blessing him all but wholly. He had not the robustness of Johnson; the supreme critical reason (as against understanding) of Coleridge; scarcely the exquisite, fitful, appreciation of Lamb or the full-blooded and passionate appreciation of Hazlitt. But he had an exacter know-

ledge than Dryden's, the fineness of his judgment shows finer beside Johnson's bluntness ; he could not wool-gather like Coleridge ; his range was far wider than Lamb's ; his scholarship and his delicacy alike gave him an advantage over Hazlitt. Systematic without being hidebound ; well read (if not exactly learned) without pedantry ; delicated and subtle, without weakness or dilettantism ; catholic without eclecticism ; enthusiastic without indiscriminateness, Mr. Arnold is one of the best and most precious of teachers on his own side. And when, at those moments, which are, but should not be, rare, the Goddess of Criticism descends, like Cambina and her lion—team into the lists and with her Nepenthe makes men forget sides and sects in a common live of literature, then he is one of the best and most precious of critics."

16. Pater.

Pater occupies a very important place in the *History of Criticism*. Referring to this Saintsbury has observed in his book, *A History of English Criticism* : "To assert too positively that Mr. Walter Pater was the most important English critic of the last generation of the nineteenth century, that he stands to that generation in a relation resembling those of Coleridge to the first, and Arnold to the latter part of the second would, no doubt, cause grumbles. The Kingdom of Criticism has been of old compared to that of Poland and perhaps there is no closer point of resemblance than the way in which critic like Polacks, cling to the *Nie Pozwalan* to the *liberum veto.* So, respecting this *Jus Polonioe* let us say that those are fair reasons for advancing Mr. Pater to such a position,

while admitting that he is somewhat less than either of his forerunners.

"His minority consists certainly not in faculty of expressions, wherein he is the superior of both, nor in fineness of appreciation, in which he is at least the equal of either but rather in a certain electric and composite character, a want of definite four square originality, which has been remarkably and increasingly characteristic of the century itself. In one point, indeed, he is almost entitled to the highest place, but his claim here rests rather on a frank avowal and formulation of what everybody had always more or less admitted, or by denying had admitted the acceptance of it by mankind, at large—to wit, the *pleasure*-giving quality of literature. Even he, however, resolutes Hedonist as he was, falters sometimes in this respect, is afraid of the plain doctrine that the test of goodness in literature is simply and solely the spurt of the match when soul of writer touches reader's soul, the light and the warmth that follow.

"In two other main peculiarities or properties of his—the, we will not say, confusion, but deliberate blending of different arts in method and process, and the adoption (modifying it, of course, by his own genius of the doctrine of the 'single word', he is again more of a transmitter than of a kindler of the torch. The first proceeding had been set of foot by Lessing in the very act of deprecating and exposing clumsy and blind anticipations of it ; the second was probably taken pretty straight from Flaubert. But in the combination of all three, in the supplements of mother-witty, and, above all, in the clothing of the whole with an extraordinary sympathetic and powerful atmosphere of thought and style—in these things he

stands quite alone, and nearly as much so in his formulation of that new critical attitude which we have seen in process of development ever since the Romantic uprising.''

Pater does not belong to the category of formula and professional critics. Referring to this Aldington has observed in his introduction to the *Selected Works of Walter Pater*: "Fundamentally Pater was neither prose poet nor critic, but something in between the two with the critic, or at any rate, the man of letters predominating. The fact that good literary critics are rarer than good poets need not cause either elation or depression, and rather too much has been made of it. Alfter all, Galapagos tortoises which are ugly are much rare than antelopes which are very attractive. On the other hand, the multitude of literary critics who are not good is enormous and oppressive, specially since they naturally rate their own ungraceful carpings above the work of people who can produce others types of writing; which results in a sort of intellectualist Gresham's law—*i.e.*, bad writing drives out good. Probably the happy and healthy state for arts of all kinds is neither in the monastery nor the lecture-room, but in the workshop where criticism is chiefly by emulation, and successful criticism consists in doing a good thing better.

"In spite of wars and revolutions and the exigencies of common man we shall have (by what miracle ?) an immense amount of art and literature inherited from the past. As long as there is any esteem for this heritage, it will need curators and critics, above all critics with the rare gifts of appreciation and interpretation. Among the defects of criticism we must deplore the acrimonious

tone and the dogmatic precept as if a critic were an eighteenth century school-master with a disordered liver and a too active cane. There have been too many fusty or frivolous pedants giving forth dogmatic rules of literary and artistic procedure in matters where they were ludicrously incompetent. To this, many gifted men in the nineteenth century added an intolerable love of preaching. Outbidding melancholy Jacques they saw sermons in everything and pitilessly delivered them. Of such was the kingdom of Coleridge, Carlyle, Ruskin, and a multitude who did not possess their remarkable gifts.

"Acrimonious criticism is a kind of literary cock-fighting and, one can only deplore the fact that a luminous poet like Pope should have wasted so much time, ability and nervous energy on purely negative work, *The Dunciad*. The retaliation, no doubt, was richly deserved but it only immortalised the people it was supposed to destroy.

"The criticism of precept may be traced far back through Europeans writing to the *Poetics* of Aristotle, a work, in some respects, of extraordinary merit, though it contains statements of very doubtful validity, and abounds in *verites a la palisse*, including two whole sections on the most elementary facts of speech and grammar. With Aristotle analytic generalisation tends to become precept, and instead of saying 'this is what the poets do', he says or implies 'this is what poets ought to do.' 'From this arose the belief in rules and the 'critic' in the role of a birch-bearing dominie whose duty it was to flog erring creative writers. Hence the brutalities of the old Quarterly, Edinburgh and Blackwood's, of Jefferey and Gifford, Croker and Lockhart, 'this will never do,'

back to your gallipots.'

"'A quite different tendency may be traced to 'Longinus,' who showed clearly that aim of literature (and of the other arts) is to give intellectual pleasure, and hence that no art needs to be justified by supposed secondary utilities. Quality is determined, not by rules and experts, but by the response of the audiences for whom the specific work is intended, and this is not the result of following formulas but of gifted and powerful personalities. This 'Longinus' (whoever he was) started the opposite kind of criticism, the criticism, of enthusiasm, appreciation, interpretation showing what is admirable rather than what is supposed to need reprehension. The object of 'Longinus' is not critical legislation by the attainment and sharing of the highest forms of intellectual enjoyment. Above all, he avoids wasting time on such flimsy paradoxes as Aristotle's arguments to prove that poetry is more serious and scientific than history.

"'Though Pater was obviously of the party of 'Longinus', he never quoted him as far a I recollect while he often quotes Aristotle and was much influenced by Platonic ideas. The chief influence on Pater was not any writer of antiquity but Goethe. Though hardly a professional critic, Goethe could not speak or write on any topic of art and literature without hitting off some vivid suggestion, some highly important and profound remarks. His criticism is all the better for being mostly free from the apparatus and pretence of formal criticism, especially as he tends always to raise the subject from specialist and pedantic interests to a wide, serene world of universal culture. Informal criticism has produced some of the critical masterpieces of our own literature—the 'defences'

of poetry by Sidney and Shelley, the Francis Thompson essay on Shelley, Wordsworth's and Arnold's prefaces, and more recently, the slang, erratic, but highly original remarks on American literature by D.H. Lawrence.

"Oliver Elton who considers Pater as the greatest English critic since Coleridge has observed in his book, *A Survey of English Literature*, Vol. I : "Many of our critics have walked in the high road of life, and written for all men in the language of the world. Such was Dryden ; and such, when he dropped long words,was Johnson. In their passages, and in Matthew Arnold's too, there is abundance of fresh air ; and the want of fresh air is the great deficiency in Walter Pater, and a source of the discomfort which he causes to most readers unless they are like himself. Yet he is our greatest critic since Coleridge. He left behind him a little creative writing, and a sheaf of what he called 'appreciations.' Time has little dulled or worn that fabric ; it is dyed too fast. What Pater may have lost by his esoteric and not wholly healthy habit of mind, and his indifference to the broad energies of mankind, he more than recovers by his delicacy of sense and his unimpeded concentration. Much of Matthew Arnold's writing is, to use his own agreeable phrase, 'touched with caducity' he was very English, and he could dot keep off politics. Pater was rewarded for knowing so well what he could do. His influence stole out from a narrow circle ; it has never reached the larger public but it has never retreated.

"He has given a clear account of the discipline of mind and sensibility that is required for the 'aesthetic critic' that is for himself. An early paper called *Diaphaneite* shadows forth an ideal of character and 'culture',

now and afterwards, in the accent that others keep for words like 'grace' or holiness'. In writing of Coleridge he celebrates the 'relative spirit' which shuns fixed principles in metaphysic or criticism and tries to see life and art in their real complexities taking each belief or mental product, each poem of school of painting, as it comes; not judging it by canon, but considering how it may have grown, what human need or emotion it may serve, and how far it attains full or appropriate expression. All this the critic exists to feel, and then he has to find words for his feeling; thus acquiring, like Goethe it may be hoped, a sense by which 'no touch of the world of form, colour and passion is disregarded'; and further, 'an intellectual *finesse* of which the ethical result is a delicate and tender justice in the criticism of human life'; a phrase to be recalled by those who may fancy that Pater was at any time to true Cyrenaic.

"This view is developed in Wickleman (1867), in the light of the supposed teaching of Goethe. Extract, by hard study, the secret of every form of culture, and enjoy it 'with a kind of passionate coldness', so reaching 'the supreme artistic view of life'; the Greeks will lead you that way if the are well understood. In the Renaissance the cult is defined in terms suggested by Aristotle. The virtue of all works of art and the fairer forms of nature and human life', lies in the 'special, unique impression of pleasure' that they give. Pater did himself some wrong in the sentences, afterwards cancelled, in which he seemed to reduce the quest of life itself to a series of disconnected 'moments' of pleasure. Apart from any false psychology involved, his own creed implies a strict perception of the differences of spiritual or artistic quality

between pleasure. This is clear enough in his study (1874) of Wordsworth. He still, no doubt, uses the Vintner's terms; we are to find the poets 'peculiar savour'; or the playgoer's—we value art and poetry 'as they afford the spectacle' of the concentrated presentment of passion and this we are to 'witness with appropriate emotions'. But, when he comes to the analysis, it is after all the solemn and spiritual parts of Wordsworth that are defined and his purer gift; and the pleasure of the 'spectacle' becomes nothing less than the sharing of that life of impassioned contemplation', which is judged by Wordsworth himself to be the highest. Of his country-folk we hear for example:

> 'Breaking from time to time into the pensive spectacle of their daily toil, their occupations near to nature, come those great elementary feelings, lifting and solemnising their language and giving it a natural music. The great, distinguishing passion came to Michael by the sheepfold, to Ruth by the wayside adding these humble children of the furrow to the true aristocracy of passionate souls...........A sort of Biblical depth and solemnity hangs over this strange, new passionate pastoral world, of which he first raised the image and the reflection of which some of our best modern fiction has caught from him.'

"So with Shakespeare. We are told that he, too, 'sits as a spectator, and knows how the threads in the design before him hold together under the surface'; as he watches (in the way that the critic should imitate) the course of events in his *Measure for Measure* (1874). There seem to be two fallacies in this. First of all, you simply sit aloof, and also have the 'appropriate emotion', combining enjoyment with detachment. 'Plunge in man' we exclaim, and 'take your share (be sure that Shakespeare did so before

he earned his right, if he ever claimed it, to sit on the bank and look on); plunge in, trouble about *things*, and you will get the unexpected emotions enough that way whether appropriate or not. Else you will exclude life itself from the fine art of living. Secondly, contemplation is not the same thing as detachment. None the less, Pater's account of Angelo or of Isabella, and of the 'finer justice' involved in the issue, and of the varying levels of workmanship in the play, continues or revives, the great tradition of Shakespearean criticism.

"For he is always proclaiming his cult, and always rising well above it, so that it does not do him much harm; in its cruder shape it was by no means good for everybody. By sheer sensibility and wits, or perhaps through some human experience of his own, Pater winds deep into the spirit of Wordsworth, or Raphael, or Sir Thomas Browne. His actual *organon* of criticism is only half indicated in his theory. Moreover the theory is quite half true; for all the romantic critics, and many others, had said that pleasure is the end of art, as knowledge is the end of science. Aristotle had spoken of the 'special pleasure,' of one or another art; and the principle is duly extended to this or that writer or production. It was the slightly perverse formulation of this truth, and the mannered, hushed style of Pater's language, and his Epicurean pose, that bred suspicion and may divert the reader from his real gift. Also he talked about art and beauty in a way which is not easy to avoid while expounding him, but which make us feel that the words require a rest. Some of the 'Pre-Raphaelite' group do the like; and his essay, afterwards withdrawn and certainly rather turgid, on *Aesthetic Poetry* (written as early as

1868) may be his tribute to that connexion; along with one on Dante Gabriel Rossetti, written in 1883, which is much maturer.

"The appreciative temper, in itself, might not seem to favour the quest for principles; it fears to hamper itself by discovering rules. But this anxiety is vain; for mankind must needs seem for universals, and if you or I find ourselves brought up short in that direction, it only means that we have not the requisite philosophical intelligence. Pater is not thus checked; he has an aesthetic and a 'poetic' of his own. He does not, like Aristotle and Hegel, exalt the drama, but he sees in music the perfect type of all art, precisely because in music it is impossible to distinguish the form from the substance or matter; Not fulness, then, of matter, but independence of matter is the criterion of rank in an art. Thus poetry is 'all literary production which attains the power of giving pleasure by its form as distinct from its matter' then; all invention, be it in verse or prose being thus included. Later criticism has shown up the equivocations lurking in this distinction. How can you enjoy the form of Michael apart from its matter? You can't enjoy even the metre by itself. You can enjoy Lucretius apart from his scientific purpose; but that is only a part of his 'matter'; 'Substance' is not the same as purpose. Afterwards, Pater insisted more fully on the natural frontiers between poetry and prose in his essay on *Style*, which is a classic in spite of some over-consideration and obscurity in its surprising developments, of the nineteenth century. It is his own art, and the ideal that he sets forth reveals his own way of working. This is the well-known cult of the 'unique word' the word which alone is 'abso-

lutely proper to the single mental presentation or vision within.' Search, as Flaubert did for this word, or idiom, or figure, or cadence—or rather wait for it ; it is itself waiting somewhere—where, in whose mind, or in what Platonic overworld, is too curious a question. This theory has come to be associated, not quite fairly, with a slow and painful attitude in composing ; the pace, however, is not the real question, and Pater himself well sees that Scott's facility, Flaubert's deeply-pondered evocation of 'the phrase', are equally good art. In one way, namely in his respect for structure, Pater is a good Aristotelian like Matthew Arnold. 'How wholesome' he says, 'is the intellectual satisfaction given, for instance, by the evolution and spacing of Lycidas. In Pater's own writing there is the concern for structure everywhere. It is easy to connect it with his attention to 'composition' in painting and sculpture.

"His readings of the writers and painters mark a renewal in English criticism ; or rather, a recovery of that direct sympathy and understanding which we associate with Lamb and his companion and Matthew Arnold, with his caprices and *ex-cathedra* sentences, had a little interrupted. Pater was more widely read, and more steadily trained, than the Romantic writers, and thus retrieves some of his inferiority to them in spirit and passion. He had also, more than most of them, the philosophic bent. Not indeed, in the way or the measure of Coleridge, whom he portrays as only defeated and distracted by his long pilgrimage towards metaphysical truth. Pater studies, while he abjures, metaphysics but he studies them, not for the solutions they offer, but as an ineradicable mode of expression for certain needs of the soul. This point of

view is not enough for the philosopher, who indeed usually neglects it ; but the critic it may carry far. For if he does not affirm, neither does he refute ; he only seeks to understand. Pater's study of Pascal (1894) is a good example of this attitude. The Jesuit doctrine is of sufficient grace, the Jansenist doctrine of fore-ordinance, do but formulate two deeply-rooted eternally recurrent aspects or types of character ; and one of them finds its born exponent in a great writer, Pascal. It was this kind of contrast, quite as much as art and ritual that drew Pater to theology. Jowett was wrong when he said, 'Mr. Pater, you seem to think that religion is all idolatry. The interpretations of Bruno (in *Gaston de Latour*) and of Spinozism, (in *Sebastian van Storck*) owe their value to this, the truly 'relative,' method. Still Pater is more at ease with Montaigne and with the poets and fantasts. They have no systems, the question of whose validity he might be taxed with eluding and yet they are charged with thought, which is moulded in turn by emotion and coloured by temperament, and which is, therefore, to be judged, in the long run, by its expression ; and here the aesthetic critic is unshackled.

"In approaching the Renaissance, Pater does not claim to do the work of the excavator, or the professional 'expert' ; some errors of detail in connoisseurship have been found in his book. Nor does he try, like the orderly historian, to show the whole story in perspective. He leaves a great deal out. For instance, while making it plain that the 'pre-Renaissance,' as we may call it, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries reached far beyond France, he does not touch on the many premonitions of it which can be traced in England at that time. He

makes 'studies'; he takes half a dozen typical great figures. Leonardo, Pico, Michelangelo, and paints each of them on a rather small canvas, every inch of it crowded. He makes Botticelli's Venus, or Leonardo's heads The subjects of a poem, or lyrical page, of his own. These are the burnished passages which made the book famous; justly enough, but somewhat to the obscuring of its intellectual force and grasp.

"For it is a study though not systematic study, of mind There is, above all, a steady outlook on the various clashes, inter-mixtures, and attempted reconciliations of thought that mark the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The mythology of the artists, compounded of sacred and profane; the play of Platonism on Christianity, of science upon art, of Rome upon the Pleiade, are handled with a sure instinct. Winckelmann is a study of the Greek Renaissance in Germany two centuries later. The Renaissance, properly so called, is, again presented in the address on Raphael; the delicate, not strong, but carrying voice of the lecturer is still in the ears of those who heard it delivered at Oxford in 1892. Ronsard, who figures in the essay on Du Bellay, appears in *Gaston*; where the physiognomies of Montaigne and Bruno also come in, bringing the survey down late in the sixteenth century.

"Of the three Shakespearean studies, that on *Measure for Measure* has the sharpest edge, and is a truly noble piece of criticism, bringing out not only the atmosphere and poetry, and the disconcerting inequalities of the play, but also, with unexpected force, Shakespeare's 'power of moral interpretation', never more fully tasked than here. Among Pater's '*appreciations*,' it stands high as revealing

the qualities for which we otherwise turn to *Marius* or—*The Child in the House* the sense of pathos and the humanity; for which his 'Epicurean' theories even at their best are too flimsy a vessel. Shakespeare's *English Kings* comes next; and Sir Frank Benson's subtle performance of Richard II is the best comment on Pater's picture of the royal 'aesthet', enjoying the pangs of the lovely poetry which he makes out of his own weakness. As to *Loves Labour Lost*, the light world of that play and its sportful sentiment receive justice, perhaps for the first time. As to the studies of Charles Lamb and Sir Thomas Browne, it is enough to guess how Lamb himself would have admired their handiwork; it resembles his own, insofar as both writers are *trackers*, with an Indian's eye and ears for trifles—a breath, a fallen twig, a half-effaced-trail—that will carry them to the retreat of the quarry.

> "The leading motive of Crowne's letter (Letter to a friend) is the deep impression he has received during these visits of a sort of physical beauty in the coming of death, with which he still surprises and moves his reader. There had been, in the case, a tardiness and reluctancy in the circumstances of dissolution, which had permitted him, in the character of a physician, as it were to assist at the spiritualising of the bodily frame by natural process; a wonderful new type of a kind mortified frame being evolved by the way. The spiritual body had anticipated the formal moment of death; the alert soul, in that tardy decay changing its vesture gradually, and as if piece by piece. The infinite future had invaded this life perceptibly the senses, like the ocean felt far inland up a tidal river.

"There is much in this of Lamb's perceptiveness, and also of his instinctive, never servile echo of the style of the writer who happens to be before him. Pater, of course,

has a learning, and has an intellectual and historical point of view, which are denied to, but are not required by, the 'belated Elizabethan.'

"In his criticism, Pater is never tempted artificially to separate the soul from the body of literature, the idea from the expression because he is alive to both of them equally, and also to their contexture. Herein is his strength; for if the mere study of ideas ignore art, the mere study of expression ignores the roots of expression itself and, therefore, mutilates art. On the other hand it is true that in some kinds of art, such as the lyrical, the element of ideas may be at a minimum, and the result is still poetry—very much poetry; while the study of ideas in themselves is the affair of philosophy or history, whose conclusions need not be stated in terms of art, or in literary form at all. For the critic, therefore, it is the worse extreme to neglect the form. But Pater is not faced with such a choice of evils. His power of seeing both sides is well discovered in the *Post-script* to *Appreciations*, originally published in 1876 as a Romanticism; it is a well-known attempt to define that term, and his phrase the 'union of strangeness and beauty' has become current since. More properly, it is 'the addition of strangeness to beauty,' over and beyond the classical equality of 'order in beauty', that 'constitutes the romantic character in art'; the root instinct at work being that of 'curiosity'. This, no doubt, is one of the historic 'notes', as Cardinal Newman might have said, of that new or revived ingredient in our modern literature, which we trace from the time of the poet Collins onwards. But then it is only one of the 'notes' and those who have worked out over the ground may well become shy of

using the term 'romantic' at all, since it covers so many phenomena and moreover has to be defined in opposition well discerned in Pater's essay. Still 'strange beauty' is clearly the quality that Pater himself felt most keenly, and liked most in this body of literature."

17. Croce.

There is a lot of confusion about the critical theories prevalent in the twentieth century. Various schools and doctrines are in open conflict with one another. Among all those critics the most prominent is Croce, who is the advocate of expressionism in art and criticism. Explaining Croce's place in the history of literary criticism, and his theory of art and criticism, Prof. Khadye has observed in his article *Croce's Aesthetic and Literary Criticism* : "The History of Criticism has been extremely varied. Mere praise or censure of a work of art in words like 'how fine' or 'no good' must have been its earliest form. The notable judgment in the *Iliad* on the shield of Achilles—'that was marvellous piece of work'—is the first instance of art criticism in the extant literature of Europe. An indefatigable student of early Greek would undoubtedly find a similar example in connection with some poetical utterance. But when a large body of literature came into existence, this impressionist method could not suffice. Canons of judgment had to be formulated if critical opinions were to have any weight, and this was the work of the first, and even now the foremost, literary critic.

"The great author of the '*Poetics*' took the actual works written by the poets in his own time and earlier, studied and analysed them, and arrived at a series of

inductions which have remained valuable to this day. In modern times, England has, as a rule, followed this method of going to actual works of art, and by a direct examination of them, of arriving at some valuable principles of criticism. This is the inductive method.

"As Aristotle is the father of the inductive, so Horace is the father of the judicial method of criticism. Rules of literary art were made, often by a process of borrowing from Aristotle's induction, and giving these the weight that is given in a normal state to statute law ; works of art were then judged by the definite and arbitrary standards thus laid down. The work begun in '*Arts Poetica*,' was continued after the Renaissance by Castlevetro in Italy, but its real sphere of influence was France. Rapin Malherbe, Le Bossu, Boileau, are some of the most notable critics who adopted the judicial method and perfected it in its rigidity. The method had its votaries also in England but the best literature critics of England, including Sidney and Dryden, gave it more, a lip service than a sincere recognition. Roman in origin, this has been in modern times, roughly speaking, the peculiar method of the French people.

"There is yet another method of literary criticism, a method shadowed forth by Plato and Plotinus, but a method really made possible by the philosophical theories of men like Kant, Schopenhauer, Schiller, Schelling, Hegel and Croce. The method is characteristically German. These men would first consider what is Art, whether literature is one of the Arts, if so, how far, and then apply their theories of fine arts to literature. The method has its philosophical value, but we have yet to see its value in actual literary criticism. One of these

theories—the theory of Benedetto Croce—it is our purpose to examine in this Essay. Croce is an Italian philosopher, and he is anxious to acknowledge his debt to his Italian predecessors, but it is plain to all who read his work that his spiritual home is Germany, and that his philosophy smacks of the characteristic 'thoroughness' of the Germans. We shall attempt, so far as possible, to apply the principles of his theory to literary criticism.

"There are other methods of literary criticism such as the historical, the psychological, the comparative, but none of them has yet thoroughly developed an independent existence. They have either been absorbed by the other methods we have described above, or have led the student to fields remote from the study of literature as an art."

"Criticism is an art that undergoes a great variety of changes, and aims at different objects at different times', wrote Hazlitt, and the history of criticism fully bears him out. If at one time we find it asserted, as for instance by Sainte Beuve, that 'the property of critics in general, as their very name sufficiently shows, is to judge —at need to give trenchant and peremptory judgments', at another time we find an eminent critic like M. Anatole France, maintaining that criticism is nothing but 'the adventures of a soul among masterpieces.'

"Croce indeed talks of judging a work of art. But judging has special meaning for him, and he believes that most critics of art are with him in his interpretation of that word. 'What is meant by judging a work of art? To reproduce it in oneself, answer the critics of art, almost with one voice.' These are his words in the '*Aesthetic*'. 'Apparently, therefore, he does not under-

stand the word 'judge', in the sense in which Mr. Edmund Gosse uses it in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* when he defines criticism as the 'art of judging the qualities and value of an aesthetic object.'

"Having accepted that the object of criticism is to produce the work of art in oneself, Croce proceeds to examine how this can be achieved."

" 'The judicial activity, which criticises and recognises the beautiful, is identical with that which produced it. The only difference lies in the diversity of circumstances since in the one case it is a question of aesthetic production, in the other of reproduction.' The critic who wishes to judge a work of art has to go through the same process as the artist—only the order of some steps is changed. The artist seeks the expression of an impression, tries several methods, and when ultimately he arrives at the sought-for expression, embodies it in words, phrases, colours, etc. '*the physical stimulants of reproduction.*' The critic has 'the physical signs' ready before him. These help him to recreate the expression of the artist. The only necessary condition is that the critic 'must of necessity place himself at the artist's point of view'.

"Is reproduction of 'expressions' possible ? Will not the 'expression' of the critic be different from that of the artist ? If the variety of physical and psychic conditions were intrinsically insurmountable reproduction would have been impossible, but 'the insuperability has none of the characters of necessity' and therefore it is possible, and in fact, 'when we can replace ourselves in condition, in which the physical stimulus was produced', it is achieved. In his Heidelberg lecture, he tries to make this point a little clearer. 'A life lived, a feeling felt, a

volition willed are certainly impossible to reproduce, because nothing happens more than once, and my situation at the present moment is not that of any other being, nor is it mine of the moment before, nor will be of the moment to follow. But art remakes *ideally*, and *ideally* expresses my momentary situation. Its image produced by art becomes separated from time and space, and can be again made and again contemplated in its *ideal reality* from every point of time and space. It belongs not to the *world* but to the *super-world* ; not to the flying moment, but to eternity. Thus life passes but art endures.'

"'Even if it be admitted that reproduction of an ideal artistic image is not intrinsically impossible, the fact remains that to reproduce it we must be able to replace ourselves in the conditions in which it was produced. How can this be done ? Here it is that *historical interpretation* comes to our rescue. It reintegrates in us historical conditions which have been altered in the course of history. It revives the dead, completes the fragmentary, and affords us the opportunity of seeing the work of art, as its author saw it, at the moment of production. 'In this connection Croce emphasises importance of tradition 'with the help of which it is possible to collect the scattered rays and cause them to converge on one centre.'

"'Tradition and historical research, however, do not by themselves suffice for the reproduction of a work of art, Croce adds, 'Taste and imagination trained and awakened are likewise presupposed.' Croce has said that taste and genius ; so what he insists upon is simply the necessity of continuous practice in enjoying works of art.

"'One of the corollaries of Croce's position in regard to

the function of criticism would be that the artist is his best critic. Experience does not always support this view. In defence of his own position Croce points out some 'disturbing elements. Haste, vanity, want of reflection, theoretic prejudices, make people say and sometimes others almost believe, that works of ours are beautiful, which, if we were truly to turn inwards upon ourselves we should see ugly, as they really are. If, then, these 'disturbing elements' were eliminated, the artists would be their best critics.

"Is it not possible for a man of taste to have 'an obscure vision' of what the artist saw very clearly ? If the critic be a man of cultivated taste and if he succeeds in placing himself at the author's point of view, such a thing, Croce maintains, is impossible, and if some judgments appear to prove to the contrary, it is so because 'haste, laziness, want of reflection, theoretic prejudices, personal sympathies or animosities and other motives of a similar sort, sometimes cause the critics to proclaim beautiful what is ugly, and ugly, what is beautiful.' When these 'disturbing elements' are not sufficient to account for the existence of the variety of judgments, Croce explains away the difficulty by bringing to our notice the fact, that reproduction can take place, only if all the other conditions remain equal, and that 'the physical stimulus changes and so do the psychological conditions'. To arrive at a '*just and the only criticism*' it is necessary to restore the original stimulus, and to recreate for ourselves the original psychological conditions. Historical research attempts to do this, and is invaluable for criticism of art ; but can it, we may ask, ever completely succeed in recreating the original psychological conditions?

If it cannot, '*the just and only criticism*' of the great art of the past, is no more than merely a pious aspiration.

"Croce appears to distinguish between the function of the critic and the historian of art and to give the historian a duty which by others is assigned to the critic. 'A man who, after having acquired the requisite historical erudition, reproduces in himself and tastes a work of art, may remain simply a man of tastes, or express at the most his own feeling, with an exclamation of beautiful or ugly.' That is a critic. The historian has to have 'a second internal operation'. He must 'express the reproduction in the shape of description, exposition or representation'."

Criticising Croce's theory of expressionism, Scott-James has observed in his book, *The Making of Literature* : "The main structure which Croce has erected topples to the ground because he has overlooked the evidence. He is writing about art, and he has forgotten to consult the artists. If he had consulted them they would have told him that the whole business of art is to *communicate* something to the world, and that something will be beautiful. Croce has almost forgotten communication, as he has almost forgotten beauty.

"At all times in the history of civilization the great literary artists and critics have described works of art in terms of their effects upon men. They have declared that the business of the artist was to please, or instruct, or exalt. In the course of this book, as we have passed from age to age, and artist to artist, we have watched this recurrent conviction that the creative writer was submitting his work for the judgment of the world. Some said that the writer wrote spontaneously, others that he wrote with pain and toil ; some that he followed princi-

ples of art, others that the spirit drove him. But none have denied for a moment that he was one who had something to deliver to the world—it might be a message—it might be a monument—but he gave it forth for men to judge.

"Who, we may ask, is this philosopher Croce, that he should determine *a priori* the nature of the artists, and should judge their intentions without asking them what their intentions are ? Who is he, that he should deny that they are concerned with the doing of something which most of them have affirmed to be the object of their endeavour ? Against him is the recorded experience of the artists. Surely a philosopher's business is not to dogmatize as to what the artist's experience is, but to explain it as he finds it. The artist about whom he is philosophizing exists nowhere but in his own mind, or among the most complacent of those who have misused the expression 'Art for Art's sake', and have constantly belied themselves by their hankering after recognition.

"I do not dispute that there is a sense in which the expression 'Art for Art's sake' is perfectly justifiable. It is well that the poet or painter should be wholly absorbed in his subject. It is well that he should write or paint according to his inner vision, intent on that alone, expressing his own ideal to his own satisfaction, and in his own way, allowing nothing to move him from his course. The path that he pursues will be the private way of the spirit. He will be guided by his own light. He can show reality in no manner but as he knows it.

"How could it be otherwise ? That which he has to give to the world is himself, his vision, and how could he communicate that to others except by faithful devotion

to the ideal of 'being himself' ? He cannot compromise with himself, for if he did he would cheat the world out of just that which he seeks to give—his real, his undamaged spirit. Walt Whitman was a 'chanter of personality', and gave his whole personality, indiluted, to the world. Ibsen said, 'Be thysels', because oneself is the most that a man can, and the most that an artist can offer.

"But, it may be objected, Croce does make some provision for communication.

Some provision, yes, in a rather grudging manner. But he does not admit that it is any part of the artist's proper job to create a vehicle of communication. His artist, as artist, is interested in nothing but his intuition, and it is only when he puts away his aesthetic nature, and submits to his non-aesthetic, practical will, that he designs to externalize his visit. Croce denies to the artist, as artist, what others have thought to be an essential element in the creative impulse, the desire to communicate his intuition to the world. Croce's poet speaks no language. At the most, his speech is a soliloquy.

"Art, as I understand the term, implies language, and intelligible language. Whether it be in the medium of words or paint or marble or musical sounds, does not matter. The outward reality of this language is the only common ground, the link, between the creator and the appreciator. Why is it, as Dante says, that 'poetry and the language proper for it are an elaborate and painful toil' ? Why is it that so many artists have found their medium tough, stubborn, resistant calling forth so much of the mastery of a creative mind to overcome and fashion it ? Because idea has to find incarnation in matter ; the

dead medium has to receive the form of living spirit. The gold on which Hephaestus wrought had to become black earth under his fashioning hands and 'that,' said Homer, 'was a very miracle of his craft'.

"If indeed it were the case that an artist puts away his artistry when he constructs the external form, by what virtue could it call up for others the intuition which it is intended to stimulate. If the artist has ceased to be an artist when he fashions, there is none left to work the 'miracle' of its creation. Deprive it of this miracle, and it can be no more than an empty sign, an expressive hieroglyph, a riddle to which there is no solution.

"Miss Powell has put her finger on a difficulty which seems to me insuperable in Croce's account of aesthetic communication. In his theory, she points out, the artist's intuition is elaborated out of his own experience; but the appreciator is required to elaborate just the same intuition out of something quite different—namely, the physical work of art.

"Does not this bundle of difficulties arise out of another omission on Croce's part—a fundamental omission? He seems to have left out *life*. I do not quite know what these 'impressions' are that wander about so vaguely, so meaninglessly, so unexplained in the mind, which Croce postulates. I do not know what these inert mechanical things are doing till this artist pounces upon them, and by synthesizing them creates out of them an elaborate work of art. The place that they fill so wanely in Croce's theory is that which common sense fills with life itself. Whatever philosophic language we may use or discard, it is this reality from which the artist starts, the reality that we all objectify as life.

It presents itself to use with all the fortuitousness of fact, fragments of experience that come upon us in the illogical time sequence of a day's events—waking, bath, breakfast,[a catastrophe, discussed in the newspaper, reflections about catastrophe, a telephone bell, letters written, a caller, more reflections, more ill-assorted atoms of experience. That is how life happens, impression following impression—and that is all it seems to be for Croce till the mind begins its conjuring tricks. But this life as it accidentally happens is not life as we constantly envisage it even for the purposes of every day; still less is it life as we try and recon struct it when we would 'see it steadily and see it whole.' The orderly mind puts it together, sorts it, restores it, and pictures it in some perspective. But the order it has created is not left hanging in the void of the mind. It is an order predicated of reality—of that world of reality from which the impressions come ; and our construction must stand the test of all other impressions which impose themselves upon us, and if it does not we know that we have judged wrong.

What is the difference between a photograph, which is not a work of art, and a portrait, which is ? Just this, that the photographs arrests that fragment in the life of a face which is conveyed at one and only one instant of time ; the successful portrait conveys the character of the face which we discern by watching it through a succession of instants. The one gives the face between the moments of life—that is, not alive ; the other gives us the living face.

"Real life, of course, is changing from instant to instant, and art does not attempt to reproduce this motion,

as motion, rather it fixes the character revealed in motion. There, Croce is with us. For him, too, art is characterization. But the difficulty I find in his theory is that he appears to give no adequate place to that insistent, persistent, inevitable resolute thing which is life as it comes to us, as it is thrust upon us which gives to us that which demands to be characterized in a certain way, and in no other way.

"We say that 'art is a criticism of life', and when we say that, we mean life has a determinatedness of its own, and that is why it is possible to determine it. We must suppose something intelligible before we seek to understand. The philosopher tries to determine it by philosophy. He says, for example, 'Man is a clothes-wearing biped.' The artist determines it by showing us a picture of biped thus distinguished. But though the artist proceeds by the intuitive and not the conceptual method his intuition presupposes always one universal judgment behind it. 'Life is life that.' There is one affirmation, and one sculptor makes all the time—It may be indicated by a gesture of the arm. 'There ; 'That is what life looks like when it is seen by the seeing eye.' All the other affirmations are, as Croce says, only characteristics of the intuition, thought elements in the picture which go to make it what it is, and contribute to its character.

The artist starts from life itself. How, then, is he to express himself, so that he may be understood by others who are sharing the common life of all humanity ? Only in terms of something known within the compass of that life, in a material medium. That is why Pater's stylist has to winnow and search for the right words, that is why Winckelmann's sculptor must wrestle with his resistant

material—because he is trying to get back into the world of sensible reality, of life, what he originally extracted from that same world. The externals of life gave him the impulse. The externals of life can alone give him the language with which to express what he has seen. All art, assuredly, is expression ; but it is the expression of life, as the artist see it, in a language which other man can understand.

And I said that Croce had forgotten, or almost forgotten, beauty. It is axiomatic, is it not, that a work of art is beautiful ? Not, let me repeat, that beauty is an embellishment, an added quality ; it penetrates the vision of reality to the very core, and it belongs to whatever joy or satisfaction we derive from it. Croce, as we have seen differs from Arnold, Goethe, Coleridge, Dante, Aristotle and countless others, when he appears to say that the artist as artist is indifferent to the quality of his subject, and is bound to express anything that has made an impression on him. (Here, I have necessarily overlooked that distinction between the internal and external expression.)

We may be pardoned if we prefer to accept the evidence of the august majority. If I am right in saying that the artist of producing his work thereby affirms 'Reality is like that', the affirmation carries with it the rider. 'It is worthwhile to look at it'—'it is interesting' —'I would not call it to your attention if I did not hope it is pleasing or beautiful.' 'Amongst the multitude of intuitions of which the creative artist is aware, it is not till he lights upon one which gives him a sense of aesthetic worthwhileness that he will put forth his full creative effort. When at last he feels himself impelled, with Faust, to hail the 'moment flying.'

Ah, still delay, thou art so fair !

then, and not till then, he will be anxious to wrestle with the medium of expression and labour to share his vision with the world".

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